

Women at Church in Byzantium: Where, When—and Why?

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INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of history, religion, sex, and gender have been entwined in an unrelenting embrace. It should be no surprise, then, that they were related issues in Byzantine society too. One result of this was the segregation of women in church in Byzantium.¹ In the following pages I try to determine the modalities and motives for this segregation. In so doing, I simply presume what should require no demonstration: that in Byzantine Christianity as elsewhere, women were systematically ranked after men. “Did not the Devil create woman?” (*Kαὶ μὴ ὁ διάβολος ἐποίησε τὴν γυναῖκα;*), a Byzantine

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¹ Among recent studies on women in Byzantium, see M. Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081–1261* (Cambridge, 1995), chap. 21; P. M. Beagan, “The Cappadocian Fathers, Women, and Ecclesiastical Politics,” *VChr* 49 (1995), 165–79; J. Beaucamp, “La situation juridique de la femme à Byzance,” *CahCM* 20 (1977), 147–76; eadem, *Le statut de la femme à Byzance (4e–7e siècle)*, 2 vols., I: *Le droit impérial*; II: *Les pratiques sociales*, *TM*, Monographies 5–6 (Paris, 1990, 1992); G. Buckler, “Women in Byzantine Law about 1100 A.D.,” *Byzantion* 11 (1936), 391–416; Av. Cameron, *History as Text: The Writing of Ancient History* (London, 1989); C. Galatariotou, “Holy Women and Witches: Aspects of Byzantine Conceptions of Gender,” *BMGS* 9 (1984–85), 55–94; L. Garland, “‘The Eye of the Beholder’: Byzantine Imperial Women and Their Public Image from Zoe Porphyrogenita to Euphrosyne Kamaterissa Doukaina (1028–1203),” *Byzantion* 64 (1994), 19–39, 261–313; eadem, “Conformity and Licence at the Byzantine Court in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries: The Case of Imperial Women,” *ByzF* 21 (1995), 101–15; eadem, “The Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women,” *Byzantion* 58 (1988), 361–93; C. V. Harrison, “Male and Female in Cappadocian Theology,” *JTS* 41 (1990), 441–71; J. Herrin, “In Search of Byzantine Women: Three Avenues of Approach,” in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, ed. Av. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (London, 1983), 167–89; A. Laiou, *Gender, Society and Economic Life in Byzantium*, Variorum Collected Studies (London, 1992); eadem, *Mariage, amour et parenté à Byzance au XIIe–XIIIe siècles*, *TM*, Monographies 7 (Paris, 1992); eadem, “Observations on the Life and Ideology of Byzantine Women,” *ByzF* 9 (1985), 59–102; eadem, “The Role of Women in Byzantine Society,” *JÖB* 31.1 (1981), 233–60; eadem, “Sex, Consent, and Coercion in Byzantium,” in *Consent and Coercion to Sex and Marriage in Ancient and Medieval Societies*, ed. A. Laiou (Washington, D.C., 1993), 109–221; D. M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady: Ten Portraits, 1250–1500* (Cambridge, 1994); A.-M. Talbot, ed., *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints’ Lives in English Translation*, *Byzantine Saints’ Lives in Translation* 1 (Washington, D.C., 1996); K. Nikolaou, “Ἡ γυναῖκα στὸ Βυζάντιο,” *Archaeologia* 21 (1986), 28–31; eadem, “Γυναίκες επιστολογράφοι στη μέση βυζαντινή περίοδο (8ος–10ος αι.),” *Proceedings of the 2nd International Symposium: Communication in Byzantium* (Athens, 1993), 169–80; eadem, Η θέση της γυναίκας στη βυζαντινή κοινωνία (Athens, 1993); eadem, “Οι γυναίκες στο βίο και τα έργα του Θεοφίλου,” *Symmeikta* 9, *In Memory of D. A. Zakythinos*, II (Athens, 1994), 137–51.

interlocutor asks rhetorically in the fictitious *Life of St. Andrew the Fool* (ca. 650–ca. 950),² and though the answer was “no,” the question alone is symptomatic: “Anti-feminism was a fundamental tenet of Byzantine thinking until the sporadic introduction of western ideas of romantic love in about the twelfth century.”³ So my interest focuses on whatever other factors, exacerbating or mitigating, may have determined the place of women in church in Byzantium. In so doing I try to avoid anachronistic thinking, though without pretending to be uninfluenced by contemporary concerns. As A. Laiou said apropos of analogous issues in Byzantium, “While one must be cautious not to superimpose current concerns on past societies, nevertheless it would be absurd not to recognize the fact that historians are moved and informed by the debates of their own day.”⁴ For that, historians need offer no apologies.

A. WHERE? THE PLACE OF LAYWOMEN IN CHURCH

I. The Byzantine Church

First some precisions. By “Byzantine church” I mean “Byzantine-rite church,” the church building designed for the celebration of the “liturgy of the Great Church” in use throughout the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Byzantinist-practitioners of other disciplines may choose to use the epithet “Byzantine” more broadly, assigning the term “Byzantine” to churches in Palestine or church plate from Syria, provided the objects in question date from a time when that province was within the Byzantine Empire. But for the historian of liturgy, church plate from Syria is no more Byzantine than a Chinese restaurant in Rome is Italian. The issue is not geography or political borders, but the distinct ecclesial cultures of the Orthodox patriarchates and their respective liturgical traditions before they were finally Byzantinized in the first centuries of the second millennium.⁵ These distinctions are not pedantry. Without them everything in liturgy, at least, becomes a complete muddle.

Furthermore, in the present context, by “Byzantine church” I mean secular church. The peculiarities of the disposition of space for women in nunnery chapels are a separate problem. Arrangements in segregated areas where women were more in charge of their lives than elsewhere cannot be considered typical.

II. The Liturgical Space of the Laity

In addition to clarifying nomenclature we must also recall that T. F. Mathews⁶ has dispensed with the former “received doctrine” according to which the Byzantine nave

²L. Rydén, ed., *The Life of St. Andrew the Fool*, 2 vols., Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 4.1–2 (Uppsala, 1995), II, line 2224. On the date, which C. Mango would place in the later 7th century, Rydén ca. 950, see *ibid.*, I, 41–56; C. Mango, “The Life of St. Andrew the Fool Reconsidered,” *RSBS* 2 (1982), 297–313, repr. in *idem*, *Byzantium and Its Image: History and Culture of the Byzantine Empire and Its Heritage*, Variorum Collected Studies (London, 1984), no. VIII.

³C. Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (London, 1980), 225–26.

⁴Laiou, “Sex, Consent, and Coercion in Byzantium,” 110–11.

⁵See R. F. Taft, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short History*, American Essays in Liturgy (Collegeville, Minn., 1993), 56–57 and 64 n. 31.

⁶T. F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park, Pa.-London, 1971), 117–25.

was reserved for liturgical activity and hence closed to the laity.⁷ In fact, only the ambo-sanctuary areas were enclosed and set apart for the exclusive use of the clergy. The chancel-solea-ambo barrier in early Constantinopolitan churches was designed precisely to keep these spaces and their connecting runway unimpeded by the laity. What would have been the point of this walled-in solea if the laity were excluded from the nave? And in fact, several sources Mathews adduces describe the congregation in the center of the nave crowding up to the chancel, ambo, and their connecting solea, the better to see and hear what was going on.

1. The Preaching of Chrysostom (398–404)

The Byzantine historian Sozomen, a native of Gaza writing some time after 443 A.D. about ecclesial events in the crucial century from 324 to 425, presents in his *Church History* VIII, 5.2, a scenario that would hardly have been possible if the laity were kept in the side aisles, away from the nave. As Sozomen describes it, Chrysostom's preaching in Constantinople attracted such crowds pressing around to hear him that he sometimes preached from the ambo in the center of the nave instead of seated on his throne behind the altar in the sanctuary, as was more customary even, apparently, for Chrysostom:⁸

Τοσούτον δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν τὸ πλῆθος ἐκεχίνεσαν καὶ τῶν αὐτοῦ λόγων κόρον οὐκ εἶχον, ὥστε, ἐπεὶ ὡστιζόμενοι καὶ περιθλίβοντες ἀλλήλους ἐκινδύνευον, ἔκαστος προσωτέρῳ ιέναι βιαζόμενος ὅπως ἐγγὺς παρεστῶς ἀκριβέστερον αὐτοῦ λέγοντος ἀκούοι, μέσον ἑαυτὸν πᾶσι παρέχων ἐπὶ τοῦ βήματος τῶν ἀναγνωστῶν καθεζόμενος ἐδίδασκεν.⁹

So much did the crowd press around him, unable to get enough of his words, causing danger by pushing this way and that and crushing one another, each one struggling to get closer so that by standing near he might hear more accurately what he [Chrysostom] was saying, that he placed himself on the readers' ambo in the midst of all and taught them seated there.

In his sermon *In Ioh. hom. 3, 1*, Chrysostom himself confirms this pushing and shoving to get near the ambo.¹⁰

2. The Synod of Constantinople (518)

A similar mob scene accompanied a synod held at Constantinople in 518.¹¹ With the accession of the Orthodox emperor Justin I on July 10, 518, the pro-Chalcedonian popu-

⁷See the remarks in R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, Pelican History of Art Z24 (Harmondsworth, 1965), 159. The later Yale edition, revised by R. Krautheimer and S. Ćurčić, moderates this view somewhat (486 n. 12). I am grateful to Prof. Marchita Mauck for pointing this out to me.

⁸Sozomen, *Hist. eccles.* VIII, 18.7–8, in Sozomenus, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. J. Bidez and G. Ch. Hansen, GCS 50 (Berlin, 1960), 374 = PG 67:1564B; cf. Maximus, *Mystagogy* (628–630 A.D.) 14, PG 91.1:692–93.

⁹GCS 50:357.11–15 = PG 67:1528BC; trans. adapted from *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. P. Schaff (Grand Rapids, Mich., ser. 1: 1974–; ser. 2: 1952–; hereafter NPNF), ser. 2, II:402; a less circumstantial account of the same in Socrates, *Hist. eccles.* VI, 5.5, in G. Ch. Hansen, ed., *Sokrates Kirchengeschichte*, GCS, n.s., 1 (Berlin, 1995), 317 = PG 67:673B = NPNF, ser. 2, II:140. On the location and posture of the preacher in this period, see A. Olivar, *La predicación cristiana antigua*, Biblioteca Herder, Sección de teología y filosofía 189 (Barcelona, 1991), 726–36.

¹⁰PG 59:37.

¹¹Background details in R. F. Taft, *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, IV: *The Diptychs*, OCA 238 (Rome, 1991), 102–3, and, most recently, J. Speigl, “Synoden im Gefolge der Wende der Religionspolitik unter Kaiser Justinos (518),” *OKS* 45 (1996), 3–8.

lace forced the newly elected (April 17, 518) Patriarch John II Cappadox (518–520) to include the Council of Chalcedon in the conciliar diptychs. The occasion was the patriarchal eucharist on July 16 in Hagia Sophia: “at the time of the diptychs the gathered throng, in complete silence, crowded around the sanctuary in great numbers and listened” (τῷ καιρῷ τῶν διπτύχων μετὰ πολλῆς ἡσυχίας συνέδραμον ἄπαν τὸ πλῆθος κύκλῳ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου καὶ ἡκροῶντο) to the deacon proclaim the four councils and the deceased Orthodox patriarchs.¹²

3. Paul Silentarius (ca. 563 A.D.)

Nor was this crowding up to the clergy area just an abuse in times of special excitement or tension. Writing around 563 A.D., Paul Silentarius, in his *Description of the Ambo of Hagia Sophia*, gives a vivid description of the people crowding up to the solea to touch and kiss the evangeliary being borne back to the altar after the reading of the Gospel. The sanctuary (ἀδυτον, θυσιαστήριον, βῆμα) of Justinian’s Hagia Sophia, described in minute detail by the Silentiary,¹³ was an elevated area including and extending out in front of the apse, itself a relatively shallow space filled with the curved steps of the elevated synthronon where the clergy sat. The altar-room in front of it was enclosed by a Π-shaped chancel barrier (τέμπλον, διάστυλα, κάγκελος, κάγκελλον, κάγκελλα, κιγκλίς, κιγκλίδες, etc.) jutting out into the nave from the two secondary piers at the northwest and southwest extremities of the apse. Three doors, one in each side (north-west-south) of the chancel, provided access to the altar-room. Extending out into the nave before the central “Holy Doors” in the west face of the chancel was a walled-in, raised passageway, the solea, which led to the oval-shaped ambo enclosure toward the center of the nave. The Silentiary describes this ambo as an “island amidst the waves of the sea . . . joined to the mainland coast by an isthmus”—the solea—“a long strait” extending up to the sanctuary doors and bounded by waist-high walls.¹⁴ This runway kept open the space needed for the processional comings and goings between sanctuary and ambo. And it was needed precisely to keep back the people crowding around, as is clear from the Silentiary’s description:

[247–59] Here the priest who brings the good tidings passes along on his return from the ambo, holding aloft the golden book; and while the crowd strives in honor of the immaculate God to touch the sacred book with their lips and hands, the countless waves of the surging people break around. Thus like an isthmus beaten by waves on either side, does this space stretch out, and it leads the priest who descends from the lofty crags

¹²ACO III, 71–76 (citation 76).

¹³Paul Silentarius, *Descriptio S. Sophiae* 418–23, 682–805, and *Descriptio ambonis S. Sophiae* 50ff: ed. P. Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentarius, Kunstbeschreibungen Justinianischer Zeit, Sammlung wissenschaftlicher Kommentare zu griechischen und römischen Schriftstellern* (Leipzig-Berlin, 1912), 227–65 = Paulus Silentarius, *Descriptio S. Sophiae et ambonis*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB 32 (Bonn, 1837), 3–58 = PG 86.2:2119–2264 (hereafter these works are cited according to line number only); trans. C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453, Sources and Documents in the History of Art* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972), 82, 87–89, 91–96. Cf. S. G. Xydis, “The Chancel Barrier, Solea and Ambo of Hagia Sophia,” *ArtB* 29 (1947), 1–24; Mathews, *Early Churches*, 96–99; R. F. Taft, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of Gifts and Other Pre-anaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, 2nd ed., OCA 200 (Rome, 1978), 178ff; R. J. Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia: Architecture, Structure and Liturgy of Justinian’s Great Church* (London, 1988), 232–33, fig. 252; 271, plan A2; 276–77, plans A7–8.

¹⁴Paul Silentarius, *Descriptio ambonis* 224–46; Mango, *Art*, 95.

of this vantage point [the raised ambo] to the shrine of the holy table [the altar]. This entire path is fenced on both sides with fresh green stone of Thessaly.¹⁵

4. St. Stephen the Younger (d. 765)

This crowding up to the chancel is confirmed by a further witness not mentioned by Mathews, Stephen the Deacon, in his *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, written ca. 807. While attending night vigils with his mother, St. Stephen, martyred in 765 during the Iconoclast persecution under Constantine V Copronymus (740–775), would press up against the sanctuary chancel in order to hear the lections better: “Nor did he interrupt going by night (*νυκτοπορῶν*) with his saintly mother to the customary vigils (*ἀγρυπνίας*) held in memory of the saints. And that honorable young man received such grace that when it was time to be seated for the readings, he stood by the chancel (*πρὸ τῆς κιγκλίδος ιστάμενος*), attentive to the reader.”¹⁶ Obviously, Stephen was assisting at the service from the nave, and not tucked away in a side aisle under the galleries.

III. The Women’s Place in Church: The Documents

The sources speak of women in general—presumably baptized laywomen of varying social status—as well as of two distinct categories of women: the empress or imperial consort and deaconesses. I shall discuss ordinary women and the empress as mention of them occurs in the documents; the deaconesses I reserve for separate treatment later (below, B.I-II).

What parts of the church building do the sources designate as the women’s place of worship in Byzantium? Numerous texts locate women in the galleries, which are called either “catechumena,” or some generic name, or, very rarely, “gynaeceum.” More often, the latter term is used to designate areas on the ground floor assigned, presumably, to the women. In what follows I generally refer to the second-story aisles as “galleries.” This I intend as a generic architectural designation like *στοά* or *ὑπερῷα*, neutral with respect to purpose. I use “catechumena” only to translate the corresponding Greek terms (*κατηχούμενα, κατηχουμενεῖα, κατηχουμενία*) when they are actually found in the source I am discussing. The same, *mutatis mutandis*, applies to the term “gynaeceum,” which I use only to translate *ό γυναικίτης* or, less commonly, especially in later Byzantine sources, the adjective *γυναικωνῖτις*, also used substantively.

As with the term “catechumena,” the fact that the Byzantines, for whatever reason, thought it useful to denominate a place as “the women’s” in itself proves nothing. This is not the place to digress on the maddening insouciance with which the Byzantines threw around terms. I just wish to underline that although I am sure the terms “catechumena” and “gynaeceum” not only came from somewhere, and must also at some time or other have had reference to some reality, one can in no way infer solely from their continued use that such a referent had remained operative. Consequently, I will assert that women were in the galleries or elsewhere only when they are actually sighted there, not just because some text refers to the place as “the women’s.” I impose this restriction for the

¹⁵ Mango, *Art*, 95–96.

¹⁶ PG 100:1081 (= BHG 1666). For the dates given, see C. Mango, *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople. Short History* (Washington, D.C., 1990), 222; S. Gero, *Byzantine Iconoclasm during the Reign of Constantine V, with Particular Attention to the Oriental Sources*, CSCO 384, Subsidia 52 (Louvain, 1977), 123.

simple reason that the same texts speak of the galleries as “catechumena,” though no extant source ever actually places the catechumens there—a question I return to later (below, A.IV.1).

1. The Council of Laodicea (ca. 380)

The earliest text from the Byzantine realm to legislate concerning the place of women in church is from the Council of Laodicea in Phrygia Pacatiana, near the modern Denizli in Turkey, in the last quarter of the fourth century.¹⁷ Canon 44, “On women not entering the sanctuary” (Περὶ τοῦ μὴ εἰσιέναι ἐις ιερατεῖον γυναικάς), rules “That women should not enter the sanctuary” (“Οτι οὐ δεῖ γυναικάς εἰς τὸ θυσιαστήριον εἰσιέναι”).¹⁸

Why does this prohibition single out women, when access to the sanctuary was forbidden to all the laity, male and female (see below, D.I)? The key to this prescription may be in canon 11 of the same synod, which decrees “That one should not institute in church those called female presbyters or presiders” (Περὶ τοῦ μὴ δεῖν τὰς λεγομένας πρεσβύτιδας ἥτοι προκαθημένας ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ καθίστασθαι).¹⁹ Who were these female presiders—literally, “women who sit in front”? They reappear as “the widows who sit in front” (寡婦 坐前女) in the fifth-century Syriac *Testamentum Domini* I, 19, 41, and 43,²⁰ which assigns them a place at the eucharist with the clergy, within the altar veil (I, 23).²¹ Prescinding from the whole Pandora’s box of female ministry in the Early Church that this and similar early texts open up, I suspect that canon 44 of Laodicea may have been addressing the problem of female ministry rather than the more general issue we are dealing with in this paper.²² Canons were promulgated to bring problem situations under control. Since one can hardly imagine that all laywomen of Asia Minor were flocking into the sanctuary at services, in direct opposition to the already existing fourth-century *taxis* (see the documents cited below, D.I), the prohibition probably envisaged some particular local situation perceived to be getting out of hand, like the one just cited from the *Testamentum Domini*.

2. Gregory Nazianzen (380–381)

Gregory Nazianzen was briefly bishop of Constantinople during the Arian domination of the church there before the First Council of Constantinople (381), over which Gregory presided, placed the Orthodox again in control. In his famous *Dream about the Anastasia Church* 19–20, he locates the women in the galleries:

¹⁷On Laodicea, see C. Foss, “Laodikeia,” *ODB* II:1177. On the dating of the synod, see P. P. Joannou, *Discipline générale antique (IIe–IXe s.)*, 2 vols. plus index, Fonti codificazione canonica orientale, fasc. 9 (Grottaferrata, 1962–64), I.2:127–28; Theodoret of Cyrrhus (d. ca. 466), *Interpretatio Ep. ad Coloss.* 2.18, PG 82:614B = *CPG*, 5 vols., ed. M. Geerard and F. Glorie, *Corpus Christianorum* (Turnhout, 1983–87), 6209, refers to canon 35 against angel worship (Joannou, *Discipline*, I.2:144–45), which means that the synod was no later than Theodoret.

¹⁸Joannou, *Discipline*, I.2:148.

¹⁹Ibid., 135.

²⁰*Testamentum Domini nostri Jesu Christi*, ed. I. E. Rahmani (Mainz, 1899), 26–27, 98–99, 102–3. On this little-studied document, see now G. S. Sperry-White, “Daily Prayer in Its Ascetic Context in the Syriac and Ethiopic *Testamentum Domini*” (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1993), esp. chap. 3 for the issue in question. I am grateful to Dr. Sperry-White for sending me a copy of his study.

²¹*Testamentum Domini*, ed. Rahmani, 34–37.

²²From the same period (ca. 380), the *Apostolic Constitutions* is also concerned with what women ministers can and cannot do: cf. *Les Constitutions apostoliques*, ed. M. Metzger, vol. 1: books I–II, SC 320 (Paris, 1985); vol. 2: books III–VI, SC 329 (Paris, 1986); vol. 3: books V–VIII, SC 336 (Paris, 1987), esp. book III, 6 and 9,

Αἱ δὲ ἄρες ἀφ' ὑψηλῶν τεγέων εὔκοσμον ἀκουνὴν Ἀγναὶ παρθενικαὶ κλῖνον ἄμα ἐσθλογάμοις.²³

From the upper story the pure maidens
together with the married women bend a
gracious ear.

3. Sozomen (after 443)

Sozomen, in his *Church History* VII, 5.4, narrates a miracle story confirming the presence of women attending a liturgical service in the galleries of the same Anastasia church during the same brief and turbulent episcopate of Gregory Nazianzen. A pregnant woman fell from the gallery to her death, but was revived by the “common prayer” (*κοινῆς δὲ παρὰ πάντων εὐχῆς*) of the congregation, a reference—so it would seem from the vocabulary²⁴—to the customary litanies of intercession following the lections at eucharist or at the end of the major hours like Vespers and Orthros:

΄Ως δέ τινων ἀλήθη λέγειν ισχυριζομένων ἀκήκοα, ἐκκλησιάζοντος τοῦ λαοῦ, γυνὴ ἐγκύμων ὅπο τῆς ύπερφου στοῖχος καταπεσοῦσα, ἐνθάδε τέθνηκε, κοινῆς δὲ παρὰ πάντων εὐχῆς ἐπ' οὐτῇ γενομένης ἀνέζησε, καὶ σὺν τῷ βρέφει ἐσώθη.²⁵

As I have heard, some insist it is true that once, when the people were assembled for worship, a pregnant woman fell from the gallery aisle and was killed on the spot, but was restored to life at the common prayer of all for her, and saved together with the babe in her womb.

As with all such anecdotes, the issue is not whether the story is true. Even in a legendary tale, Sozomen would not have had the woman take flight from the galleries unless that was where a Byzantine might legitimately have expected her to be.

4. John Rufus of Maiouma (ca. 512)

²⁶ John Rufus, bishop of Maïouma, in his anti-Chalcedonian *Plerophoria* 36, written in Greek shortly after 512 A.D. and translated into Syriac before 572,²⁶ recounts how the holy woman Eliana cried out from the galleries (Syriac *لَا مَلِكَةَ στοά*) of the church in Constantinople where Nestorius was preaching, “Be damned, Antichrist!”²⁷

5 *Paul Silentarius* (ca. 563 A.D.)

Writing around 563 A.D., in his *Description of the Church of Hagia Sophia* 580–89, Paul the Silentary also assigns women to the galleries, which he calls variously “women’s gal-

SC 329:132–35, 142–45; resuming and expanding the 3rd-century *Didascalia* 15, in R. H. Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum: The Syriac Version Translated and Accompanied by the Verona Latin Fragments*, with an introduction and notes (Oxford, 1929), 133–34, 142; F. X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, 2 vols. (Paderborn, 1905), I, 190–93, 198–201.

²³ PG 37:1255A; cf. F. van de Paverd, *Zur Geschichte der Meßliturgie in Antiocheia und Konstantinopel gegen Ende des vierten Jahrhunderts: Analyse der Quellen bei Johannes Chrysostomos*, OCA 187 (Rome, 1970), 416–18. On the Anastasia, see Socrates, *Hist. eccles.* II, 38.14–26, GCS, n.s., 1:165–66 = PG 67:325–28; G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451*, Bibliothèque byzantine, Études 7 (Paris, 1974), 448; R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin*, I: *Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarchat oecuménique*, 3, *Les églises et les monastères*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1969), 22–25; idem, *Constantinople byzantine: Développement urbain et répertoire topographique*, AOC 4A (Paris, 1964), 89–90; R. F. Taft, “Byzantine Liturgical Evidence in the Life of St. Marcian the Economos: Concelebration and the Preanaphoral Rites,” *OCP* 48 (1982), 159–70.

²⁴Cf. J. Mateos, *La célébration de la parole dans la liturgie byzantine*, OCA 191 (Rome, 1971), 59.

²⁵GCS 50:306 = PG 67:1425B; cf. van de Paverd, *Meßliturgie*, 419.

²⁶ Joannes Rufus, bishop of Maiuma, *Plérophories: Témoignages et révélations contre le Concile de Chalcédoine*, ed. F. Nau, PO 8:7.

²⁷ Ibid., 81–82.

leries” (θηλυτέρων ὑπερώια [389]), “where the place of the women’s seats appears” (ἐνθα γυναικείων ἀναφαίνεται ἔνδια θώκων [541]), the “women’s precincts” (γυναικεῖοι ἐδέθλοι [562]), “women’s loggia” (θηλυτέρη αἰθουσα [587]):²⁸

[580] Δήεις καὶ νοτίην βορεώτιδι πάσαν ὁμοίην [581] μηκεδανὴν αἰθουσαν, ἔχει δέ τι καὶ πλέον ἡδε· [582] τείχει γάρ τινι χῶρον ἀποκρινθέντα φυλάσσει [583] Αὐσονίων βασιλῆι θεοστέπτοις ἐν ἑορταῖς. [584] ἔνθα δ’ ἐμὸς σκηπτοῦχος ἐφῆμενος ἡθάδι θώκῳ [585] μυστιπόλοις βίβλοισιν ἐὴν ἐπέτασσεν ἀκούνη.

[586] Ἰσα δὲ τοῖς ὑπένερθε καὶ ὑψόθι πάντα νοήσει [587] θηλυτέρην αἰθουσαν ἐξ ἀμφοτέρας τις ἀνελθῶν· [588] ἡ γὰρ ὑπερτέλλουσα πρὸς ἔσπερον οὐκέτι δοιαῖς [589] ἵση ταῖς ἐτέρησιν, ὑπὲρ νάρθηκος ιοῦσα.

[580] On the south you will find a long aisle altogether similar to the northern one, yet it has something in addition: for it contains a space separated by a wall, reserved for the Ausonian emperor on solemn festivals. Here my sceptered sovereign, seated on his customary throne, lends his ear to [the reading of] the sacred books.

[586] And whoever mounts up will find that the women’s aisles on either side are similar to those below; but the one that runs above the narthex, to the west, is not like the other two.²⁹

The Silentiary’s *ekphrasis* is perfectly straightforward:

1. The north and south ground-floor aisles flanking the nave left and right are identical except for the emperor’s metatorion in one of the bays of the south aisle [580–81].³⁰
2. Each of these aisles is surmounted by a gallery north and south, similar to the aisles below them [586].
3. These galleries are “the women’s” (θηλυτέρη) [587].

Sources describing women assisting at services in the galleries of Constantinople from the time of Gregory Nazianzen’s episcopacy (380–381) continue right until the end of Byzantium. So the question is not did women assist at services from the galleries, but rather were all the women there, were they always and only there and nowhere else, and were they the only ones there? Though the Silentiary does not say so, it is sometimes inferred that if the second-story galleries were for the women, the ground-floor aisles below them must have been for the men, at least before the middle Byzantine period. This was more or less the received doctrine until Mathews proposed that women attended liturgy on the ground floor *in the earlier period too*.³¹

6. Procopius (ca. 550–560)

The argument hangs on the interpretation of an admittedly difficult passage from *De aedificiis* I.1:55–58, of the sixth-century historian Procopius of Caesarea in Palestine, a

²⁸Cf. Mathews, *Early Churches*, 130.

²⁹Trans. adapted from Mango, *Art*, 85.

³⁰Mathews, *Early Churches*, 96, fig. 50, 132, 134; and Mainstone, *H. Sophia*, 223–26 and fig. 59, 249, 252; both locate the ground-floor metatorion of H. Sophia in the south aisle, though not in the same bay. On this question see also C. Mango, *The Brazen House: A Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople*, Arkeologisk-kunsthistoriske Meddelelser 4.4 (Copenhagen, 1959), 64, 72 and n. 198; C. Strube, *Die westliche Eingangsseite der Kirchen von Konstantinopel in justinianischer Zeit: Architektonische und quellenkritische Untersuchungen*, Schriften zur Geistesgeschichte des östlichen Europa 6 (Wiesbaden, 1973), 73–81, 163–64.

³¹Mathews, *Early Churches*, 130–33.

text that both Mathews and C. Strube have translated (into English and German respectively) and discussed at some length. Here is what Procopius wrote about Hagia Sophia ca. 550–560:

55. στοαί τέ εἰσιν ἐκατέρωθι δύο, οἰκοδομίᾳ μὲν τοῦ νεώ οὐδεμιᾷ διειργόμεναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ μεῖζον αὐτοῦ ποιοῦσαι τοῦ εὔρους τὸ μέτρον, καὶ τῷ μῆκει μέχρι ἓς τὸ περάς συνεξικνούμεναι, τὸ δέ γε ὑψος καταδεέστεραι, καὶ αὐταῖς δὲ ἡ τε ὄροφὴ θόλος καὶ ὁ χρυσὸς ἐγκαλλώπισμα. 56. ταύταιν δὲ ταῖν στοαῖν ἀτέρα μὲν τὸν ἄνδρας εὐχομένους διακεκλήρωται, γυναιξὶ δὲ ταύτῳ ποιουμέναις ἡ ἄλλῃ ἀνεῖται. 57. παρολλὰξ δὲ οὐδὲν ἔχουσιν, οὐδὲ διαφέρουσι δῆπον ἄλλήλαιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἵσον αὐταῖν τῷ ιερῷ ἓς κάλλος διήκει καὶ ὠραῖζει τὸ ἐμφερές. 58. τίς δὲ τῶν ὑπερώφων τῆς γυναικωνίτιδος ἐρμηνεὺς γένοιτο, ἡ τάς τε παμπληθεῖς διηγοῖτο στοὰς καὶ τὰς περιστύλους αὐλάς, αἵς ὁ νεώς περιβέβληται,³²

55. There are two colonnaded aisles, on either side, and these are not separated from the nave by any structural element, but serve rather to increase its width; in length they reach to its very end, while in height they are lower. They too have vaulted ceilings and gold decorations. 56. One of this pair of colonnaded aisles has been assigned to the praying men, while the other is reserved for women doing the same. 57. But there is no distinction between them [= the two aisles] nor do they really differ from each other, but the equality of the pair serves to enhance the beauty of the church and their resemblance is an ornament. 58. Who, then, could describe the galleries of the gynaeceum, or enumerate the abundance of the colonnades or the columned halls with which the church is surrounded?

The *crux interpretum*, by general agreement, is § 55: στοαί τέ εἰσιν ἐκατέρωθι δύο, οἰκοδομίᾳ μὲν τοῦ νεώ οὐδεμιᾳ διειργόμεναι. The term *στοά* has various related meanings: a covered colonnade or portico, a porch, the narthex or aisle of a church.³³ The central nave of Hagia Sophia is flanked along its full length by a colonnaded side aisle on two sides, north and south. Each of these side aisles is surmounted by a similarly colonnaded gallery to form a double or two-story aisle on each side. So in fact there are not two but four *στοαί* in all, *two on each side*, one on ground level, one above it. The translations of H. Dewing and C. Mango—“There are two [stoa-like]³⁴ colonnades (*stoai*), one on each side”³⁵—rightly preserves the ambiguity of the original, since both aisles and galleries could be considered stoai. At any rate, the text has been the subject of divergent interpretations:

1. If Procopius means, as Strube seems to think possible (though less plausible),³⁶ that “There are stoai, two on each side”—that is, four spaces in all, two on each side (an aisle surmounted by a gallery)—then what he says in § 56 about one of them being for the men, one for the women, could be taken to mean that one side of the church *both upstairs and down* is reserved for the men, the other for the women. But I do not think that is what the Greek

³² Procopius, with an English trans. by H. B. Dewing, with G. Downey, 7 vols., VII: *Buildings*, Loeb (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), 26–28.

³³ Ibid., 412; cf. Mathews, *Early Churches*, 130.

³⁴ Gloss added in Dewing’s version (note 32 above).

³⁵ Procopius, *Buildings* 25; Mango, *Art*, 76.

³⁶ Strube, *Die westliche Eingangsseite*, 90–91.

means. Furthermore, as Strube recognizes, this interpretation would contradict most other sources, which seem to assign the galleries in the plural and without distinction to the women.

2. So I take Procopius to be saying in § 55 that “there are aisles, one on each side, two of them [in all],” referring thereby only to the ground-floor side aisles flanking the nave north and south, two in all, one on each side. If so, then in § 56 Procopius is asserting that women assisted at the liturgy from one of the ground-floor aisles flanking the nave, as well as from both galleries (he uses the plural), where he also locates the women in § 58. This, if I understand him correctly, is the solution Mathews favors, and he shores up his argument by appealing to Procopius’ use of the dual for the stoa in § 56,³⁷ the flavor of which I have tried to preserve in my version by translating the dual as “pair.”

In effect, Procopius is saying, “There are ground-floor aisles, one on each side, two in all, exactly alike. One of this pair is for the men, one for the women, whereas the galleries over these aisles are both for the women.” Not only does this accord with contemporary sources like Paul Silentarius, which assign the galleries in the plural and without distinction to the women, but it also seems to fit in better with the context of what follows in § 58, where Procopius clearly designates the galleries in the plural as the women’s. Furthermore, Procopius’ insistence that the women’s and men’s aisles are the same (§ 57) dovetails perfectly with the Silentary’s assertion (above, A.III.5), that the aisles on ground level and the women’s galleries above them are basically the same.

7. Evagrius Scholasticus (6th century)

Another contemporary description of Hagia Sophia from Evagrius Scholasticus (ca. 536–d. after 594), in *Church History* IV, 31, has also given rise to varying interpretations:

1. On the right and left, columns of Thessalian marble are set out in a row beside them [the main piers], supporting, by means of other, similar columns, galleries (ὑπερῷα), letting those who so wish to look down upon the rites being enacted (προκύπτειν τοῖς βουλομένοις διδόντες ἐς τὰ τελούμενα) [below]. 2. It is from there that the empress, when she is in attendance on feastdays, witnesses the offering of the holy mysteries (τῇ ιερουργίᾳ τῶν μυστηρίων ἐφίσταται).³⁸

Evagrius places the empress in the galleries during worship (2), but refers in the masculine to others looking down from the galleries (1) during services. For Mathews, then, “Evagrius does not seem to be aware that the galleries are reserved exclusively for women.”³⁹ But Evagrius could just be employing the traditional generic masculine. Besides, the emperor and his retinue sometimes attended services from the galleries (see below, A.III.9.a–e), as did the empress and her entourage (A.III.9.a), which included male guards and retainers.

³⁷ Mathews, *Early Churches*, 130–32.

³⁸ J. Bidez and L. Parmentier, *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius with Scholia* (London, 1898), 180; trans. adapted from Mango, *Art*, 79–80.

³⁹ Mathews, *Early Churches*, 131.

8. *The Narratio de S. Sophia (8th–9th century)*

The eighth–ninth-century legendary *Diegesis* or *Narratio de S. Sophia*, 5 and 26, also mentions the north and south aisles and the galleries of Hagia Sophia:

[5] 1. Τὸ δὲ δεξιὸν μέρος τοῦ γυναικίτου ὅλον καὶ ἔως τοῦ κίονος τοῦ ἀγίου Βασιλείου καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ μέρος τι ὑπῆρχον οἰκήματα Χαρίτωνος εὐνούχου τὸ ἐπίκλην Χηνοπούλου, ἢ καὶ ἔξωνίσθησαν μετ' εὐχαριστίας. 2. Τὸ δὲ ἀριστερὸν μέρος τοῦ γυναικίτου καὶ ἔως τοῦ κίονος τοῦ ἀγίου Γρηγορίου τοῦ θαυματουργοῦ ὑπῆρχον οἰκήματα Ξενοφῶντός τινος . . .⁴⁰

[26] 3. . . . Ἐν δὲ τῇ δεξιᾷ πλευρᾷ τοῦ δεξιοῦ γυναικίτου ἐποίησε θάλασσαν μέχρι σπιθαμῆς, ἵνα ἀνέρχεται τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ κλίμακα μίαν, ὥπως ἄνω τῆς θαλάσσης διέρχονται οἱ ιερεῖς. 4. Ἔστησε δὲ κατὰ πρόσωπον δεξαμενὴν ὁμβριαίαν ναμάτων καὶ ἔγλυψε λέοντας δώδεκα, παρδάλεις δώδεκα, δορκάδας δώδεκα, ἀετοὺς καὶ λαγωοὺς καὶ μόσχους καὶ κορώνας καὶ αὐτοὺς ἀνὰ δώδεκα· καὶ ἐκ τῶν φαρύγγων αὐτῶν ἐμείσθαι τὸ ὕδωρ διὰ μηχανημάτων εἰς τὸ τοὺς ιερεῖς νίπτεσθαι μόνον. Ἐκάλεσε δὲ τὸν τόπον Λεοντάριον. 5. καὶ Μητατώριον, ὥπερ ἐκεῖσε ἀνήγειρεν κοιτῶνα ὠραῖον διάχρυσον, ἵνα πορευομένου αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ ναῷ ἐκεῖσε καθεύδῃ.⁴²

This account locates not one (as in Procopius, A.III.6 above) but two ground-floor gynaecea in Hagia Sophia:

1. The text in § [5] describes two properties, formerly occupied by houses, that had been purchased for the construction of Hagia Sophia.⁴⁵
2. Since the right and left gynaecea *as well as part of the nave* now stand on these two properties, the text is obviously referring to the ground floor of the basilica, not to the galleries. This is confirmed by the reference ([5] 1–2) to the

⁴⁰T. Preger, *Scriptores Originum Constantinopolitanarum*, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, *Scriptores Graeci* (Leipzig, 1901; repr. 1989), 79–80. On this source, see G. Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire: Études sur le recueil des “Patria”*, Bibliothèque byzantine, Études 8 (Paris, 1984), 191–314 (with French trans., 196–211).

⁴¹Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire*, 198, 200 n. 37.

⁴²Preger, *Scriptores*, 103–4.

⁴³Mango, *Art*, 101, from which this translation of § [26] is adapted, translates this as “the right women’s gallery,” but I think the text is referring to the ground-floor south aisle, as I explain below.

⁴⁴Α σπιθαμὴ = 23.4 cm: Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire*, 255 n. 190.

⁴⁵On the location of these properties, see *ibid.*, 221 n. 38.

[5] 1. The whole right-hand part of the gynaeceum up to the pillar of St. Basil and also a part of the nave had been the house of the eunuch Chariton, nicknamed “the goose-peddler,”⁴¹ which was purchased with thanksgiving. 2. But the left-hand part of the gynaeceum up to the pillar of Gregory the Thaumaturge had been the house of a certain Xenophon, a cobbler by trade . . .

[26] 3. . . . On the right-hand side of the right gynaeceum,⁴³ he [Justinian] made a pool in which water collected to the depth of one span⁴⁴ and a gangway for the priests to walk over the pool. 4. Facing the pool he set up a cistern of rain water, and he carved twelve lions, twelve leopards, twelve deer, eagles and hares and calves and crows likewise twelve each, out of whose throats water flowed by means of a mechanism for the ablution of the priests alone. He called this place “Leontarion.” 5. There, too, he constructed the metatorion, a beautiful chamber covered with gold, so that he might rest there whenever he went to church.

columns of St. Basil and of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus. The latter column,⁴⁶ which (below, B.II.2 § 8) supposedly contained the body of the saint, was the northwesternmost freestanding column of Hagia Sophia, at the northwest corner of the north (left) aisle by the northwest door to the narthex. The column of St. Basil was the corresponding one at the southwest corner of the opposite aisle of the church.⁴⁷

3. Since the text in § [5] clearly distinguishes the nave from the gynaeceum, the left and right—that is, north and south (1–2)—gynaecea occupied both the north-south ground-floor side aisles flanking the nave, but did not include the central nave itself. This accords perfectly with § [26], which again refers to a ground-floor gynaeceum in the right (south) side aisle (3) where the emperor's ground-floor metatorion (5) was located.⁴⁸
4. The existence of two ground-floor gynaecea is further confirmed in section [23] of the *Diegesis*, which refers to the lighting fixtures as “six thousand golden candelabras and lamp clusters of the narthex, the ambo, the bema, and the two gynaecea” (*πολυκάνδηλα καὶ βοτρύδια τοῦ νάρθηκος καὶ τοῦ ἀμβωνος καὶ τοῦ βῆματος ὀλόχρυσα σὺν τῶν δύω γυναικίτων χιλιάδας ἔξι*),⁴⁹ thus listing the two gynaecea in a series of spaces on the ground floor of the church.⁵⁰
5. Of course, Hagia Sophia also had an imperial metatorion in the south gallery, used by the empress and on some occasions also by the emperor, as we see in *De ceremoniis* (below, A.III.9.a). This is confirmed by Nicetas David Paphlagon's *vita* of Patriarch St. Ignatius (847–858, 867–886): at the eucharist in Hagia Sophia on November 23, 867, when Basil I (867–886) restored Ignatius to the patriarchal throne, the emperor was in attendance in the right (south) gallery,⁵¹ that is, where the upper-level imperial metatorion was located. In addition, according to *De ceremoniis*, the emperor used some sort of loge, permanent or improvised with curtains, on days when he assisted at liturgy from the galleries in other churches of the capital (below, A.III.9.b–f). So one cannot argue from the mention of the metatorion alone that our text could not be referring to the south gallery. I would consider that unlikely, however, since what most sources call the emperor's metatorion was certainly on the ground floor (see above, A.III.5 [580–85] and below, A.III.9.a). Hence I think our anonymous *Diegesis* is referring to the ground-floor south aisle.

⁴⁶This column also appears in the Russian pilgrim accounts of Anthony of Novgorod (1200 A.D.), in Kh. M. Loparev, ed., *Книга паломника: Сказание мест святых во Цареграде Антония Архиепископа Новгород скаго в 1200 году*, PPSB 51 = 17.3 (St. Petersburg, 1899), 6–7 (hereafter Loparev); and the post-Crusader Russian “Anonymous Description of Constantinople,” in G. P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, DOS 19 (Washington, D.C., 1984), 132–33 (text), 213–14 (commentary).

⁴⁷Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 213–14 and “H” in plan I facing p. 199; E. M. Antoniades, “Ἐκφραστις τῆς Ἀγίας Σοφίας, 3 vols. (Athens, 1907–9), II, 205, 226–27 and pl. 62 facing p. 226; R. L. Van Nice, *Saint Sophia in Istanbul: An Architectural Survey* (Washington, D.C., 1965), pl. 9.

⁴⁸See note 30 above.

⁴⁹Preger, *Scriptores*, 100.

⁵⁰Mango, *Art*, 100, translates this as “the two women's galleries,” but Strube, *Die westliche Eingangsseite*, 93, also understands the *Diegesis* to be talking about the ground-floor aisles.

⁵¹PG 105:544D (= BHG 817). I am grateful to the late Alexander Kazhdan of Dumbarton Oaks for this reference.

6. As for the large pool ([26] 3) plus a cistern with fountain (4) supposedly located in the south aisle being described, G. Dagron⁵² is tempted to see this as referring to the baptistry and well that the anonymous Russian pilgrim account (ca. 1389/91 A.D.) speaks of.⁵³ That is improbable.⁵⁴ The de Khitrowo translation Dagron relies on is inaccurate, depending as it does on the “Dialogue” version of the text, which locates these emplacements at the east end of Hagia Sophia, and G. Majeska is doubtless correct in identifying this water source as the Great Fountain (φιάλη) in the atrium before the west facade of Hagia Sophia.⁵⁵ Besides, the *Diegesis* is legendary and not a little fantastic, so its account of these water sources need not be taken as a literal description of actual emplacements. Closer to reality than the anonymous Russian pilgrim is Anthony of Novgorod (1200 A.D.), who refers to “the cisterns (кладези) . . . and bath (баня) of the patriarchs in the galleries (на полатахъ)” of Hagia Sophia.⁵⁶ The term полати/палати clearly refers to the church galleries. But since Anthony locates in the same place, на полатахъ, the patriarchal store-room (оградъ) full of fruits and other victuals, he is doubtless referring to the patriarchal palace, a multistory building contiguous to the south side of Hagia Sophia, whose south gallery communicated directly with the patriarchal quarters.⁵⁷

Note that this interpretation of the *Diegesis* as describing gynaecea in both the north and south ground-floor aisles of Hagia Sophia directly contradicts Procopius, who assigns one ground-floor aisle to the men, the other one plus both galleries, north and south, to the women (above, A.III.6 §§ 56, 58). As we shall see in the next section, *De ceremoniis* also refers to only one ground-floor gynaeceum in Hagia Sophia and the other churches of the capital—but it is not always the same aisle, and, unlike Procopius, *De ceremoniis* nowhere implies that the other aisle was not also “gynaeceum” space.

9. De ceremoniis (10th century)

The earliest full description of Byzantine imperial participation in church services is found in *De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae*.⁵⁸ Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (945–959) compiled this imperial ceremonial treatise from material representing several historical strata, and not all of its prescriptions can be taken uncritically as a mirror of tenth-century Byzantine society.⁵⁹ By that time the government had retreated somewhat

⁵² Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire*, 255 nn. 190–91.

⁵³ Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 134–35, 138–39.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 134 n. 26, 202.

⁵⁵ Mme B. (= Sofija P.) de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires russes en Orient* (Geneva, 1889), 229; Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire*, 255 n. 191; cf. Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 138 nn. 32–33, 138–39.

⁵⁶ Loparev, 23; cf. Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire*, 255 n. 191. De Khitrowo, *Itinéraires*, 101, translates it as “au-dessus des tribunes.”

⁵⁷ C. Mango, “Hagia Sophia,” *ODB* II:893; R. Cormack and E. J. W. Hawkins, “The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul: The Rooms above the Southwest Vestibule,” *DOP* 31 (1977), 200–202, 247–51.

⁵⁸ A. Vogt, ed., *Le Livre des cérémonies de Constantin Porphyrogénète*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1935, 1939) (hereafter Vogt), and idem, *Commentaire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1935, 1940); J. J. Reiske, ed., *Constantini Porphyrogeniti imperatoris De Ceremoniis aulae byzantinae*, 2 vols., CSHB (Bonn, 1829–30) (hereafter Reiske). For the respective churches mentioned below from this document, see Janin, *Églises*, and the respective articles in *ODB*.

⁵⁹ On the problems of text and authorship of this source, see, most recently, A. Moffatt, “The Master of Ceremonies’ Bottom Drawer: The Unfinished State of the *De Ceremoniis* of Constantine Porphyrogennetos,” *BSL* 56 (1995), 377–88.

from the public scene, and in his preface to the book Constantine VII explicitly admits his aim to restore traditions that had already decayed.⁶⁰ For Mango, then, “the Book of Ceremonies is essentially an antiquarian work rather than a practical manual.”⁶¹ The stylized formality of Byzantine public life, with its predilection for τάξις, or order,⁶² inevitably involved a heavy dose of ritual conservatism in church and court. Numerous aspects of civic and court life that the *Book of Ceremonies* describes as still current—the Hippodrome, chariot racing, the factions, luxurious public bathing, reclining at table—were probably no longer in general use. As Mango remarks, “These survivals suggest that the evocation of an extinct life-style, that of the Empire in its greatness, was a deliberate component of court ceremonial. Which is why, perhaps, the *Book of Ceremonies* is what it is—not a guide to existing procedure, but a collection of ancient precedents.”⁶³ Nevertheless, some of the *Book of Ceremonies*’ rituals are clearly descriptions of actual church celebrations,⁶⁴ and even in court life the continual updating of its prescriptions under Constantine VII’s successors Romanus II (959–963) and Nicephorus Phocas (963–969) must indicate some ongoing relevance to actual practice.⁶⁵

The liturgical material of interest to us, principally in *De ceremoniis* I, 1–18, describes, *inter alia*, the imperial participation in stational processions and other religious services on major feasts of the church year. This part of the text is believed to date to Emperor Michael III (842–867) around the years 847–862(?), later revised ca. 900–903 under Leo VI (886–912) and again by its final redactor, Constantine VII, ca. 957–959,⁶⁶ in the ninth–eleventh-century era of Byzantine “encyclopediaism,”⁶⁷ when τάξις was still the order of the day in church and state, and the compilation of anthologies and bureaucratic manuals was in vogue.

What is important for our purposes is that middle Byzantine sources such as the *Narratio de S. Sophia* and *De ceremoniis* not only assign a variety of activities to the galleries of churches in the capital, systematically referred to as “catechumena,” but also clearly locate the gynaeceum in both side aisles on the ground floor of these churches, whereas Procopius (above, A.III.6) assigns one ground-floor aisle as well as both galleries to the women.

a. Hagia Sophia

Among these churches the prime analogate for the rite of Constantinople is, of course, the Great Church. On the feast of Pentecost (I, 9), the emperor assists at the Divine Liturgy from his metatorion in the south aisle of Hagia Sophia, flanking the nave

⁶⁰ Vogt I, 1–2; cf. M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge-Paris, 1986), 175–76.

⁶¹ C. Mango, “Daily Life in Byzantium,” *JÖB* 31.1 (1981), 346; cf. also Av. Cameron, “The Construction of Court Ritual: The Byzantine *Book of Ceremonies*,” in *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, ed. D. Cannadine and S. Price (Cambridge, 1987), 106–36.

⁶² See A. Kazhdan and G. Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Washington, D.C., 1982), 60–66, 126, 134, 137, 158, 161.

⁶³ Mango, “Daily Life,” 352.

⁶⁴ McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 160.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 175–76; J. B. Bury, “The Ceremonial Book of Constantine Porphyrogennetos,” *EHR* 22 (1907), 217–21.

⁶⁶ M. McCormick, “*De ceremoniis*,” *ODB* I:595–97.

⁶⁷ A. Kazhdan, “Encyclopedism,” *ODB* I:696–97.

on ground-floor level.⁶⁸ The empress also attends the liturgy, not with the emperor but from another metatorion, located in the catechumena, doubtless in the south gallery right above the emperor's metatorion in the aisle below (the text does not specify which side the metatorion was on, but it is hardly imaginable for the imperial loge of the cathedral church to have been located in the less honorable north gallery when it could equally well have been on the other side, where, indeed, we see it in all other churches of the capital):⁶⁹

1. One should know that when the Divine Liturgy begins, the chamberlains mount forthwith to the catechumena and the empress exits from the metatorion, which is in the catechumena, and sits on her throne, and all the chamberlains stand on either side, and the protospathary⁷⁰ eunuchs stand behind the augusta. **2.** And at a signal from the augusta the praepositus goes out, with two ostiaries carrying their staffs, and introduces the first delegation ($\beta\eta\lambdaov$): the women-patricians of the cincture . . .

One by one, seven delegations of noble women and the wives of courtiers and court officials are ushered in and receive the kiss of peace from the empress. Then:

3. After giving the kiss of peace ($\tau\grave{\eta}\nu \acute{a}g\acute{a}pt\eta\nu$) to all, the augusta signals the praepositus, who says, "Command!" and they [the delegations of women] exclaim, "For many and good years!", and they go out. **4.** And the augusta rises and enters the metatorion with her personal chamberlains, **5.** and the rest of the chamberlains go down to the emperor.⁷¹

On the feast of Christ's Ascension, however, it is the emperor who assists at Divine Liturgy from the galleries of Hagia Sophia, where there were also communion credences (the emperor and dignitaries were brought communion in the galleries by the patriarch), an imperial dining room ($\tau\acute{r}iklinov$) closed off from the rest of the gallery since it had a door, and the imperial apartment ($\kappa\acute{o}t\acute{w}n$) with which the dining room communicated directly.⁷²

On the Sunday of Orthodoxy, *De ceremoniis* I, 37 (28), specifies that the emperor attends services from the metatorion of the catechumena and dines with the patriarch afterwards.⁷³ Also, on the Sunday after Easter the sovereigns ($o\acute{i} \delta\varepsilon\sigma\acute{p}t\acute{o}ta\acute{i}$) attend liturgy from the catechumena of Hagia Sophia and dine there afterwards (I, 25 [16]).⁷⁴ Finally, *De ceremoniis* II, 24, 38, has the imperial party assist at the consecration of a patriarch from the upper metatorion in the catechumena.⁷⁵

The *De ceremoniis* account of the imperial devotions in Hagia Sophia provides the following data:

⁶⁸ Vogt I, 59–60.

⁶⁹ See below, A.III.9.b, d, f, h.

⁷⁰ "Spathary" means "swordbearer," but by this time most of these offices were titular. On the various titles in this source, see Vogt, *Commentaire*, I, 10ff, and the respective chapters in *ibid.*, II; also the respective articles in *ODB*; and especially J. Darrouzès, *Recherches sur les ḥoffīktia de l'Église byzantine*, AOC 11 (Paris, 1970).

⁷¹ Vogt I, 61–62.

⁷² *De cerim.* I, 27 (18): Vogt I, 104–5.

⁷³ Vogt I, 145–48.

⁷⁴ Vogt I, 90–91.

⁷⁵ Reiske 566, 636.

1. Hagia Sophia had two imperial metatoria, one in the ground-floor south aisle,⁷⁶ one in the gallery above it (1, 4).
2. Only the emperor (*βασιλεύς*)⁷⁷ or co-emperors (*δεσπόται*),⁷⁸ never the empress, assist at services from the ground-floor metatorion.
3. Though the gallery metatorion is used also by the empress and her entourage (1, 4), this should not be taken as reinforcing the notion that the galleries were the place of the women *exclusively*. For the emperor and his entourage, all men, are also described as attending liturgy from the galleries in Hagia Sophia, Holy Apostles (below, A.III.9.b), Chalkoprateia (A.III.9.c), and Hagios Mokios (A.III.9.d).
4. The retainers attending the empress in the galleries include not only the Byzantine equivalent of her ladies-in-waiting, but also various male officials: the praepositus, two ostiaries, some of the emperor's chamberlains who assist her at least during the receptions (1–4) before returning to their place at the emperor's metatorion below (5). Within the culture of the times, it would have been hardly imaginable for a Byzantine imperial consort and female attendants to roam about without an escort of male guards and retainers.
5. From none of this, however, can one argue anything pro or con regarding the presence (or not) of ordinary laity, male or female, in the rest of the galleries.
6. Though the text analyzed above says nothing about a gynaeceum, according to *De ceremoniis* I, 44 (below, B.II.1 § 1), there was one on the left (north) side of the ground floor of Hagia Sophia, just as in Holy Apostles (below, A.III.9.b §§ 6, 8) and Chalkoprateia (A.III.9.c: §§ 14–15), whereas in Hagios Mokios (A.III.9.d § 24), Stoudios (A.III.9.h § 30), and the Nea (A.III.9.i), the gynaeceum was on the right (south) side of the ground floor.

b. Holy Apostles

The imperial retinue assisted at the Divine Liturgy from the galleries at the Easter Monday stational liturgy in Holy Apostles,⁷⁹ the basilica where Constantine and some of the sainted bishops of the Great Church, including John Chrysostom and Gregory Nazianzen, were buried. From the description in *De ceremoniis* I, (10), it is clear that an imperial loge was located in the south gallery, and there was a gynaeceum on the ground floor. Going in procession via the Mese to Holy Apostles basilica, the emperor enters the narthex to await the arrival of the patriarch. When the patriarch has arrived with the stational procession (*μετὰ τῆς λιτῆς*) and recited the customary Introit Prayer of the Divine Liturgy in the narthex before the Imperial Doors, they enter the nave, proceeding as usual around the ambo and along the solea into the sanctuary via the Holy Doors—that is, of the templon or chancel—where the emperor places his offering on the altar.⁸⁰ Then the emperor and patriarch reverence the relics in the sanctuary and outside it:

⁷⁶ See note 30 above, and *De cerim.* I, 1 and 9: Vogt I, 12–13, 59–61.

⁷⁷ *De cerim.* I, 9: Vogt I, 59–61.

⁷⁸ *De cerim.* I, 1: Vogt I, 12–13.

⁷⁹ J. Mateos, ed., *Le Typicon de la Grande Église: Ms. Sainte-Croix n° 40, Xe siècle*, introduction, critical text, translation, and notes, 2 vols., OCA 165–66 (Rome, 1962–63), II, 96–99.

⁸⁰ Cf. Taft, *Great Entrance*, 29–30 n. 76, 195–97.

6. Καὶ διέρχονται ἀμφότεροι ὁ τε βασιλεὺς καὶ ὁ πατριάρχης διὰ τοῦ ἀριστεροῦ μέρους τοῦ ναοῦ, ἥγουν τοῦ γυναικίτου, ἄντικρυ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου, **7.** καὶ προσκυνήσαντες ἀμφότεροι ἀλλήλους ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ ὁ πατριάρχης, ὑποστρέφει πρὸς τὸ ἐκτελέσαι τὴν θείαν λειτουργίαν, **8.** ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς διέρχεται διὰ τοῦ γυναικίτου καὶ ἐξέρχεται εἰς τὸν νάρθηκα, καὶ ἐκκλίνας πρὸς τὸ ἔξ αριστερᾶς μέρος τοῦ λουτῆρος.

9. οἱ μὲν πατρίκιοι ἴστανται ἔξωθεν τῆς πύλης τοῦ κοχλιοῦ, ὑπερευχόμενοι τὸν βασιλέα, **10.** ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς δηριγενόμενος ὑπὸ τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ κουβουκλείου . . . καὶ λοιπῶν, ἀνέρχεται διὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀριστεροῦ κοχλιοῦ ἐν τοῖς σεπτοῖς κατηχουμενείοις, **11.** τὰ δὲ βῆλα τὰ κρεμάμενα ἐν τοῖς κατηχουμενείοις σιλεντιάριοι ποιοῦσι, **12.** καὶ ἀπέλθων ἴσταται ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς μέρεσι, ἔνθα εἴθισται αὐτῷ καθ' ἐκάστην προέλευσιν ἴστασθαι, καὶ τελεῖ τὴν θείαν λειτουργίαν· **13.** οἱ δὲ πατρίκιοι καὶ οἱ στρατηγοὶ ἀνέρχονται ὅπισθεν τοῦ βασιλέως διὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ κοχλιοῦ, καὶ ἴστανται ἀπέναντι τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου, ἔνθα καὶ τὸ βασιλικὸν ἀντιμίσιον πρόκειται, ἐν ᾧ καὶ κοινωνεῖ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐν ταῖς τοιαύταις προελεύσεσιν.⁸¹

6. And both of them, the emperor and the patriarch, go through the left side of the church, that is, the gynaeceum, across from the sanctuary, 7. and after both of them, the emperor and the patriarch, have bowed to each other, the patriarch goes back to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, 8. while the emperor goes through the gynaeceum and goes out into the narthex and heads toward the left side of the atrium.

9. The patricians stand outside the door to the spiral stairway acclaiming the emperor. 10. The emperor, preceded by the chief chamberlains . . . and the rest, ascends via the same left-hand spiral stairway into the venerable catechumena, 11. and the silentiaries arrange the curtains that hang in the catechumena, 12. and [the emperor] goes and takes his place on the right side where he is accustomed to stay at each procession,⁸² and assists at the Divine Liturgy. 13. But the patricians and the generals go up behind the emperor, via the same spiral stairway, and stand opposite the sanctuary, where the imperial antimission is located, at which the emperor receives communion at such processions.

The text presents no problems of interpretation. After reverencing the relics at the tombs, the emperor and his entourage cross the gynaeceum on the left (north) side of the sanctuary (6, 8), exit the nave to the narthex (8) where the door to the spiral stairway was located on the same north (left) side (9), and mount the stairway to the catechumena (10). There (11) in the tribune to the right (12)—that is, over the south aisle of the nave—the silentiaries improvise an imperial loge with curtains (*βῆλα*), and the sovereign enters the loge to follow the Divine Liturgy being celebrated directly below in the sanctuary (12). The principal imperial chamberlains, apparently, attend the emperor in the loge, while the lesser officials of his escort remain by the communion antimission, located in the west tribune over the narthex, opposite the sanctuary to the east (13).⁸³

c. Chalkoprateia

The church of Theotokos in Chalkoprateia also had galleries, reached by a wooden stairway and furnished with an imperial metatorion where the emperor assisted at the

⁸¹Vogt I, 69–70.

⁸²Προέλευσις (accession, coming out, issuing forth), the term commonly used in *De cerim.* for imperial court processions, is not one of the common Byzantine church terms for liturgical processions: see J. F. Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy*, OCA 228 (Rome, 1987), 205–9.

⁸³On the details of these places and furnishings, see Vogt, *Commentaire*, I, 111.

liturgy on Annunciation (March 25), according to *De ceremoniis* I, 1, 39 (30), 44 (43).⁸⁴ In Chalkoprateia as in Hagia Sophia and Holy Apostles, a gynaeceum is also located on the ground floor to the left (north) of the sanctuary:

14. The sovereigns, having entered the sanctuary and deposited their purse on the holy altar, leave via the left side of the same sanctuary and go through the gynaeceum of the same church (ἐξέρχονται διὰ τοῦ ἀριστεροῦ μέρους τοῦ αὐτοῦ θυσιαστηρίου, καὶ διέρχονται διὰ τοῦ γυναικίτου τῆς αὐτῆς ἐκκλησίας). **15.** And in the gynaeceum they await the whole senate, which renders homage to the sovereigns, **16.** and the sovereigns with the patriarch and the chamberlains go through the arch to the holy altar of the [chapel of the] Holy Coffer . . .⁸⁵

When the devotions are completed,

17. a reception is held in the same gynaeceum of the church (γίνεται δοχὴ ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ γυναικίτῃ τῆς ἐκκλησίας).⁸⁶

In *De ceremoniis* I, 39 (30), this chapel of the Holy Coffer (**16**) holding the prized relic of the Virgin's cincture⁸⁷ is reached by exiting the main sanctuary from the left side: διὰ τῆς πλαγίας τοῦ ἀριστεροῦ μέρους ἐξελθῶν, εἰσέρχεται εἰς τὴν ἀγίαν σορόν.⁸⁸ So the chapel must have been located on the ground floor just north of the main sanctuary. On the same side of the sanctuary is "the gynaeceum" (**14–15**), which the sovereigns and patriarch cross on the way to the chapel (**14–16**). Far from being restricted to the women, it is used by the imperial party for the traditional ceremonial homage (**15**) and for receptions (**17**).

d. Hagios Mokios

On Midpentecost Wednesday the emperor attends services from the galleries of the church of the martyr St. Mokios (I, 26 [17]):

18. Εἰσέλθων δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐν τῷ λουτῆρι καὶ διελθὼν μέχρι τῶν γραδηλίων τῶν ἀνερχομένων ἐν τῷ νάρθηκι, κάκεῖσε νιψάμενος, διέρχεται διὰ τοῦ νάρθηκος, στάντες δὲ οἱ πατρίκιοι καὶ στρατηγοὶ μετὰ τῆς συγκλήτου πλησίον τῆς εἰσαγούσης πύλης εἰς τὸν κοχλίαν, ἐπεύχονται τὸν βασιλέα. . . .

19. Ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς δηριγεύμενος ὑπὸ τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ κουβουκλείου καὶ βασιλικῶν οἰκειακῶν, τοῦ τῆς καταστάσεως τε καὶ σιλεντιαρίων, ἀνέρχεται διὰ τοῦ κοχλιοῦ, **20.** καὶ μικρὸν ἐκκλίνας ἀριστερόν, διέρχεται διὰ τῶν κατηχουμενών τοῦ νάρθηκος, καὶ εἰσέρχεται εἰς τὸν κοιτῶνα αὐτοῦ.⁸⁹

18. Entering the atrium and going across to the steps leading into the narthex, the emperor, after performing the ablutions there, crosses the narthex while the patriarchs and generals with the members of the senate, standing by the door to the spiral staircase, acclaim the emperor. . . .

19. Then the emperor, preceded by the chief chamberlains and imperial domestics, the master of ceremonies and the silentiaries, goes up via the spiral staircase, **20.** and veering a bit to the left, goes through the catechumena of the narthex and enters his apartment.

⁸⁴ Vogt I, 24–25, 154–55, 173.

⁸⁵ *De cerim.* I, 1: Vogt I, 24–25.

⁸⁶ *De cerim.* I, 1: Vogt I, 25.

⁸⁷ Vogt, *Commentaire*, I, 76; Mathews, *Early Churches*, 33.

⁸⁸ Vogt I, 154.

⁸⁹ Vogt I, 93.

Once the emperor is vested, the account continues, he goes out from his apartment into the catechumena:

21. Τοῦ δὲ βασιλέως ἔξελθόντος ἐκ τοῦ κοιτῶνος αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς κατηχουμενίοις ὑπερθεν τῶν βασιλικῶν πυλῶν, εἰσέρχονται οἱ βεστήτορες καὶ ὑπαλλάσσονται τὴν χλανίδα τὸν βασιλέα, **22.** τὰ δὲ ἐκεῖσε κρεμάμενα βῆλα ἐν τοῖς κατηχουμενίοις κουβικούλαριοι ποιοῦσιν.⁹⁰

21. After the emperor has gone out of his apartment in the catechumena over the Imperial Doors, the vestaries enter and put on him the imperial mantle, **22.** and the chamberlains arrange the curtains that hang in the catechumena.

The emperor and his retainers then descend the spiral stairway for the Introit ceremonies of the Divine Liturgy, after which he returns to his loge in the galleries:

23. And the patriarch remains in the sanctuary for the Divine Liturgy, **24.** while the emperor, leaving the sanctuary, goes across via the side of the gynaeceum (ἔξελθὼν ἐκ θυσιαστρίου διέρχεται διὰ τῆς πλαγίας τοῦ γυναικίτου), **25.** and the patricians stand outside the door to the spiral stairway, along with the generals, the master of ceremonies, and the silentiaries, acclaiming the emperor with the senate. **26.** The emperor, preceded by the chamberlains and imperial domestics, goes up via the private spiral stairway and enters the loge (ἀνέρχεται διὰ τοῦ μυστικοῦ κοχλιοῦ καὶ εἰσέρχονται εἰς τὸ παρακυπτικόν), where he assists at the Divine Liturgy. **27.** If he so wishes, the emperor awaits the patriarch there until it is time to take his place at table. **28.** If not, he goes through the catechumena . . . and enters his apartment. When the time for dinner has come, the emperor leaves his apartment . . . and goes into the catechumena, in which the precious table has been set.⁹¹

After the liturgy the emperor dines with the patriarch in the catechumena, either waiting for him there or first passing through the catechumena to enter his apartment (διέρχεται διὰ τῶν κατηχουμενίων . . . καὶ ἀπέρχεται ἐν τῷ κοιτῶνι αὐτοῦ), then coming out again later, when it is time to join the patriarch at table.⁹²

Here again, several distinct spaces can be identified:

1. There is an imperial chamber or apartment (κοιτών) in the gallery over the narthex at the west end of the church (**20–21**).
2. There is also an imperial box or loge in the catechumena from which the emperor assists at the liturgy (**26**). It is called not “metatorion” but τὸ παρακυπτικόν, literally “lookout,” an observation post from which the activities below could be seen.
3. This loge was clearly a space distinct from the imperial apartment over the narthex in the west gallery (**20–21**), for after the liturgy the emperor must leave the loge and traverse the catechumena to enter his apartment (**28**).
4. The galleries, called “catechumena” (**20–21**), were accessible via two spiral stairways large enough to accommodate the emperor and his entourage. The first, entered from the narthex (**18–19**), seems to have been located at the southwest corner of the building, since the imperial party, upon coming up into the catechumena, had to turn left to get to the west gallery over the

⁹⁰Vogt I, 94.

⁹¹Vogt I, 96.

⁹²Vogt I, 96.

narthex (20). This stairway to the catechumena was doubtless also accessible to the public. The other one, called “the private spiral stairway” (26), probably because it was reserved for use by the imperial retinue only, apparently led from the gynaeceum inside the church (24) directly into the imperial loge in the galleries (26).

5. As in Hagia Sophia, Holy Apostles, and Chalkoprateia, this gynaeceum is an area on ground level across from the sanctuary (24), since the emperor crosses to it after exiting from the sanctuary (24) but before going up the private stairs to his loge (26).
6. The text does not say which side of the church this gynaeceum is on. But since the emperor exits the sanctuary and goes through this ground-floor gynaeceum area on his way to the private spiral stairway leading directly to his loge (24–26), and this loge was undoubtedly located in the right (south) gallery, as it seems to have been in Hagia Sophia (above, A.III.9.a), this stairway must have been on the right (south) side of the church. Otherwise it could hardly have communicated directly with the loge. At any rate, it is hardly conceivable that the imperial loge would have been placed in the north gallery on the less honorable left side of the church when it could equally well have been placed on the right side. And from the description one can infer that it was not in the west gallery. The emperor is said to leave his loge and cross the catechumena to reach his apartment (27–28) in the west gallery over the Imperial Doors (20–21), a description that would make no sense if the imperial loge and apartment were located together in the same west gallery.
7. But this means that the gynaeceum the emperor crosses to reach his private stairway also had to be on the right (south) side of the Hagios Mokios church. Since the parallel texts in *De ceremoniis* regarding Hagia Sophia (below, B.II.1 § 1), Holy Apostles (above, A.III.9.b §§ 6, 8), and Chalkoprateia (A.III.9.c § 14) identify the opposite (left/north) aisle as the gynaeceum, does this mean that *both* ground-floor aisles were for the women? The evidence is inconsistent: Procopius (above, A.III.6 [56]) clearly assigns only one of these aisles to the women, the other to the men, whereas the *Narratio de S. Sophia* (A.III.8) is equally explicit in assigning both to the women.

e. Sts. Sergios and Bacchos

De ceremoniis also describes the emperor’s attendance at the liturgy in two of the smaller churches of the capital. On Easter Tuesday he assists at Divine Liturgy in the galleries of Saints Sergios and Bacchos (I, 20 [11]).⁹³ The ritual is basically the same as what we have seen in the other churches of the capital. What is interesting for our purpose is the number of distinct spaces or chambers located in the galleries of this rather small edifice: oratory, loge, and metatorion. Even if these chambers were very small, they would occupy a lot of the gallery space in so small a building, and one would be hard put to imagine all the women of the congregation finding room in the galleries too. However, as A.-M. Talbot has reminded me, Sts. Sergios and Bacchos, like Theotokos of

⁹³ Vogt I, 79–80.

Pege and Stoudios (§§ f, h below), was the church of a male monastery perhaps little frequented by women.

f. Theotokos of Pege

On Ascension Thursday, in *De ceremoniis* I, 27 (18), the emperor attends the liturgy in the monastic church of Theotokos of the Source (*τῆς Πηγῆς*), outside the Theodosian Walls near a miraculous spring (*πηγή*).⁹⁴ After the usual Introit formalities the emperor leaves the sanctuary, crosses the right side of the nave, and goes up the spiral stairs to the catechumena, where he assists at the liturgy “in the usual place.” The catechumena contain an imperial dining room (*τρίκλινος*), an imperial apartment (*κοιτών*), a “small metatorion” (*μητατωρικίον*), and the usual two portable communion credences (*άντιμίσια*), one where the emperor communicates from the patriarch’s hands, the other for “the usual dignitaries.”

What was said above (A.III.9.e) apropos of Sts. Sergios and Bacchos applies, *mutatis mutandis*, here too. If one takes into account the size of the imperial party with its master of ceremonies, silentiaries, chamberlains, generals, senators, and the other “usual dignitaries,” doubtless accompanied by guards, all in the galleries, the galleries seem in this period to be more “imperial space” than anything else. At any rate, they certainly were not reserved for the women in this male monastic sanctuary.

g. Theotokos of Blachernai

De ceremoniis I, 36 (27), gives the imperial ceremonial for the February 2 Hypapante feast at Theotokos of Blachernai. The emperor mounts the stairs to an oratory in the catechumena (*διὰ τοῦ στυρακίου ἀνελθῶν ἐν τῷ εὐκτηρίῳ*)⁹⁵ where he attends liturgy and is brought communion by the patriarch. He also has an apartment and dining room there.⁹⁶

h. St. John Prodromos at Stoudios

The right (south) aisle of the basilica of St. John the Forerunner at the Stoudios monastery also had a metatorion, referred to explicitly as a gynaeceum. In *De ceremoniis* II, 13, after the Introit ceremonies of the Divine Liturgy on August 29, the patronal feast of the Decollation of St. John the Baptist whose relics were venerated in the monastery church,⁹⁷ the sovereigns leave the sanctuary,

29. καὶ δεξιὰ τοῦ βῆματος ἐρχόμενοι . . .
καὶ ἔξερχόμενοι εἰσέρχονται εἰς τὸ ἐκεῖσε
μητατόριον . . . **30.** εἰσερχόμενοι ἵστανται
εἰς τὸν γυναικίτην εἰς τὸ δεξιὸν πρὸς ἀνατο-
λὰς μέρος τοῦ βῆματος, καὶ ἅπτουσιν
κηροὺς εἰς τὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἀκρόασιν.⁹⁸

29. and going via the right side of the
sanctuary . . . and exiting, they enter the
metatorion there . . . **30.** [and] entering,
they stand in the gynaeceum on the right
side of the sanctuary to the east, and light
candles for the reading of the Gospel.

⁹⁴ Vogt I, 102–5. Cf. C. Mango and N. P. Ševčenko, “Pege,” *ODB* III:1616.

⁹⁵ On the term *στυράκιον*, see Vogt I, 140 n. 1.

⁹⁶ Vogt I, 140; cf. *De cerim.* II, 52: Reiske 759.

⁹⁷ Janin, *Églises*, 430–40; on the relics, *ibid.*, 435.

⁹⁸ Reiske 563; cf. Strube, *Die westliche Eingangsseite*, 92–93 and n. 370.

i. The Nea Ekklesia

Finally, a gynaeceum is also identified in the right (south) ground-floor aisle of the Nea or “New” Church, built within the Great Palace⁹⁹ under Emperor Basil I (867–886) and consecrated by Patriarch Photius on May 1, 880. *De ceremoniis* I, 28 (19)–29 (20), has the imperial party attending services there on two occasions, the vigil (*παραμονή*)¹⁰⁰ of the feast of the Ascension of the Prophet Elijah, July 20 (the Nea had a chapel of St. Elijah,¹⁰¹ doubtless the reason for the celebration), and the dedication of the Nea on March 1.¹⁰² The Nea had galleries north and south, the latter communicating directly with the palace.¹⁰³ The *De ceremoniis* account describes a ground-floor gynaeceum with an oratory (*προσευχάδιον*), through both of which the sovereigns pass to reach a narthex on the side of the sea (*διερχόμενοι διὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ γυναικίτου . . . εἰσέρχονται ἐν τῷ ἐκεῖσε προσευχαδίῳ, κάκειθεν ἐκβοίνοντες εἰς τὸν πρὸς τὴν θάλασσαν νάρθηκα*). This narthex had a curtained area with seats for the sovereigns, from which they listened to the proclamation of the Gospel.¹⁰⁴ The sea, found in every direction except west of the promontory occupied by the monumental Hagia Sophia-Patriarchate/Great Palace-Hippodrome complex, is a less than exact point of reference. What “sea” is the text referring to? Doubtless the open water to the east (Bosporus) and south (Sea of Marmara) of the basilica.¹⁰⁵ The south gallery of the Nea communicated directly with the palace. Since the sovereigns are said to exit to the palace through the gynaeceum in question, this gynaeceum must have been in the right (south) aisle flanking the nave.¹⁰⁶ Theophanes Continuatus’ *Life of Basil I* 85–86, in his *Chronographia* V, confirms explicitly that the seaward side of the Nea was to the east.¹⁰⁷ According to the Continuator, the Nea had not only an atrium to the west (*πρὸς ἐσπέραν μὲν καὶ κατ’ αὐτὰ τοῦ νάου προαύλιο*), but also a covered portico or walk (*περίπατος*) on the other three sides, east, north, and south—the latter “facing the sea”:

κατὰ δὲ τὰς πρὸς νότον τε καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν πύλας, εἰ ἔξελθὼν πρὸς ἀνατολὰς ποιήσασθαι τὴν πορείαν θελήσειας, ἄλλον [περίπατον] εὑρήσεις ἰσομήκη τοῦ πρὸς βορρᾶν καὶ ἰσόδρομον δίσιλον.¹⁰⁸

If, on the other hand, you go out the southern doors facing the sea, and wish to proceed eastward, you will find another [portico] of equal length to the northern one and likewise extending as far as the imperial courtyard.¹⁰⁹

⁹⁹Cf. C. Mango, “Great Palace,” *ODB* II:869–70, and the literature there, especially idem, *Brazen House*; J. Ebersolt, *Le Grand Palais de Constantinople et le Livre des cérémonies* (Paris, 1910), 130–35; and the foldout plans at the end of Vogt, *Commentaire*, I.

¹⁰⁰On the term, see Mateos, *Typicon*, II, 311; R. F. Taft, “Vigil,” *ODB* III:2166.

¹⁰¹Janin, *Églises*, 361–64; C. Mango, “Nea Ekklesia,” *ODB* II:1146, and the further bibliography there.

¹⁰²Vogt I, 107–9, 111–12; cf. Strube, *Die westliche Eingangsseite*, 78 n. 300, 92–93 and n. 370. Mateos, *Typicon*, I, 346–47, records only the vigil, not the March 1 dedication.

¹⁰³Janin, *Églises*, 364.

¹⁰⁴Vogt I, 109. In *De cerim.* I, 30 (21), the sovereigns at services in the palace church of St. Demetrios also exit to hear the Gospel in a side area called the *τετράσερον* (“square” or “quadrangle”): *ibid.*, I, 115; cf. Vogt, *Commentaire*, I, 141.

¹⁰⁵See the foldout plans at the end of Vogt, *Commentaire*, I.

¹⁰⁶Ebersolt, *Palais*, 134, mistakenly places it on the north side.

¹⁰⁷Theophanes Continuatus, *Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB (Bonn, 1838), 327–28.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 328.

¹⁰⁹Mango, *Art*, 195 (slightly adapted).

j. Conclusions from *De ceremoniis*

Though the archaizing nature of *De ceremoniis* does not permit one to conclude that all its ritual prescriptions were still in force at the time of writing, I see no reason to doubt that these rubrics represent the imperial ritual on some feasts in the ninth to tenth centuries. Apart from the peculiarities dictated by the location of the imperial loges—in Hagia Sophia two permanent metatoria, one constructed in the south ground-floor aisle, the other in the gallery surmounting it; one apparently improvised in the south aisle of Stoudios or, with curtains, in the south narthex of the Nea and in the galleries of Holy Apostles and Chalkoprateia; a space called a “lookout” (*παρακυπτικόν*) in St. Mokios and Sts. Sergios and Bacchos; a “small metatorium” (*μητατωρικίον*) in Theotokos of Pege—the basic common elements of the ritual remain the same.

Regarding the main issue here, the place of the women in church during services, one can conclude the following from *De ceremoniis*:

1. A gynaeceum is identified on the left (north) side of the ground floor in Hagia Sophia, Holy Apostles, and Theotokos in Chalkoprateia, but on the right (south) side of Hagios Mokios, Stoudios, and the Nea. There is no indication, however, that this is to be understood exclusively, that is, that there was not also a gynaeceum on the opposite side of the respective churches.
2. Though nothing in *De ceremoniis* implies that the gynaeceum was restricted to the side aisles, by analogy with the *Narratio de S. Sophia* (above, A.III.8)—but against Procopius (A.III.6)—it seems likely that in this period the gynaeceum occupied both ground-floor side aisles flanking the nave north and south, leaving the central nave area to the men.
3. There is no indication whatever that the galleries, called “catechumena,” were assigned to the women or, for that matter, to the catechumens.
4. At any rate, the women were not the only ones in the galleries, nor could all the women have fit in the galleries. In small monastic churches like Sts. Sergios and Bacchos, even a small number of women in attendance at the services together with their children could hardly have been relegated to the galleries, already occupied by the large imperial entourage and all the other imperial chambers *De ceremoniis* tells us were there.

10. Symeon Metaphrastes’ Life of Chrysostom (10th century)

Still, right until the end of Byzantium, we find references to women attending services from the galleries. Symeon Metaphrastes’ *Life of St. John Chrysostom* 27, from the end of the tenth century, recounts this story:

1. Λέγεται . . . όσάκις ἀν τὸν θεῖον ἄρτον
ἰερουργῶν ἀναφέροι, ἔνθουν ὅλον γινό-
μενον, συμβόλοις τισὶ τὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἄγιον
Πνεῦμα ἐπὶ τὰ προκείμενα δῶρα καταβα-
νον ὥραν. 2. Ἐνδὲ γοῦν ποτε τῶν παριστα-
μένων αὐτῷ λειτουργῶν γυναίφ τινὶ τῶν
διακυπτουσῶν ἄνωθεν προσχόντος τὸν ὄφθ-
αλμὸν καὶ περιέργως αὐτὴν προσβλέποντος,
διακρουσθῆναι μὲν οὕτω τὴν θεωρίαν τοῦ
πνεύματος. 3. ἐκεῖνον δὲ μὴ ἀγνοῆσαι,

1. It is said . . . that, when he [Chrysostom] elevated the Divine Bread while celebrating the liturgy, he became completely enraptured and through certain symbols saw the Holy Spirit descend upon the offered gifts. 2. But when one of the ministers serving with him cast an eye at a certain woman of those looking down from above, and stared at her with curiosity, the vision of the Spirit was

ἀλλὰ τὸν μὲν λειτουργὸν αὐτίκα μετακινῆσαι τῆς στάσεως. . . . 4. εἴτο πρόνοιαν καὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος θάμενον, παραπετάσμασιν ἐπιτρέψαι τὰ ὑπερῷα διατειχίζεσθαι.¹¹⁰

thereby driven away. 3. He [Chrysostom] did not ignore this, but removed the minister from his position forthwith. . . . 4. Then, providing for future eventualities, he ordered that the galleries be curtained off with veils.

The scenario is the Elevation at the ancient communion call, Τὰ ὅγια τοῖς ἀγίοις, of the Divine Liturgy (1). Women were in attendance from the galleries (2), and Chrysostom, distracted from his mystical rapture by the fact that one of his fellow ministers is giving them the eye (2), dismisses him (3) and orders that in the future the galleries be curtained off (4) so the women could not be seen from below.

An earlier variant of the same legend is found in the eighth–ninth-century apocryphal Pseudo-Amphilochius, *In vitam et miracula S. Basillii* 9, though it uses the later term “catechumena” for the galleries.¹¹¹

11. Balsamon (ca. 1130/40–d. after 1195)

The Byzantine canonist Theodore Balsamon (ca. 1130/40–d. after 1195), commenting on Dionysius of Alexandria’s ruling (below, C.II.1) that women in menstruation may pray but are not allowed to enter the church proper or receive communion (εἰς ναὸν θεοῦ εἰσιέναι ἡ μεταλαμβάνειν αὐτὰς τῶν ἀγιασμάτων, οὐ δεῖ), describes Byzantine practice as follows:

1. . . βλέπομεν σήμερον εἰς τὰ γυναικεῖα καὶ μᾶλλον μοναστήρια ἀδεῶς τοιαύτας ισταμένας γυναῖκας εἰς τὸν προνάους παντοίαις ἀγίαις εἰκόσι κεκαλλωπισμένους, καὶ εἰς δοξολογίαν Θεοῦ ἀπονεμηθέντας. 2. καὶ ἐρωτῶντες ὅπως τοῦτο γίνεται, ἀκούομεν μὴ ἐκκλησιάζειν αὐτάς, ὅπερ ἐμοὶ τέως οὐδόκει. 3. Οὐ γάρ εἰσιν οἱ πρόναοι κοινοὶ ως τὰ τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν προαύλια, ἀλλὰ μέρος αὐτῶν ἀπονεμηθὲν ταῖς γυναιξὶ ταῖς μὴ κωλυομέναις ἐκκλησιάζειν. 4. Ὅς δὴ πρόναος τόπος δευτέρας ἐστὶ μετανοίας, ὁ τῶν ἀκροωμένων λεγόμενος. Καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ οὐδὲ ἀνδράσιν ἐφείται ἵστασθαι, ἐπιτιμηθεῖσι μὴ ἐκκλησιάζειν, ἀλλὰ ἔξωθεν αὐτοῦ προσκλαίειν. 5. Ἐδει γοῦν τὸν τοιούτους προνάους εἰς οὓς αἱ τοιαύταις ἀκάθαρτοι γυναῖκες ἔμελλον ἵστασθαι, μὴ ἀναπληροῦν τόπον ἐκκλησιῶν ἐξ ὄρθοῦ, 6. ὥστε καὶ iερ-

1. Today we see such [menstruating] women in gynaecea and especially in monasteries standing freely in the vestibules, which are decorated with all sorts of sacred images, and devoting themselves to the praises of God. 2. And inquiring how this can be, we hear that they are not attending church—which does not seem so to me. 3. For these vestibules are not for common use like the forecourts of the churches, but are a part of them set aside for women who are not prevented from attending church. 4. This vestibule is the place of second penance, called that of the hearers. Nor are men excluded by penance from attending church permitted to stand in it; they must do their weeping outside of it. 5. It is fitting, then, that these vestibules in which

¹¹⁰PG 114:1113BC.

¹¹¹F. Combéfis, ed., *SS. Patrum Amphilochii Iconensis, Methodii Patarenensis, et Andreae Cretensis opera omnia* (Paris, 1644), 183 (= CPG 3253; BHG 247; BHO 164–68, 170). On gallery use and terminology, see V. Ruggieri, “Katēchoumenon: Uno spazio sociale,” in ΕΥΛΟΓΗΜΑ: *Studies in Honor of Robert Taft, S.J.*, ed. E. Carr, S. Parenti, A.-A. Thiermeyer, and E. Velkovska, *Studia Anselmiana* 110 = *Analecta Liturgica* 17 (Rome, 1993), 391ff; Strube, *Die westliche Eingangsseite*, 90–96, 296–303; my review of Strube’s excellent monograph in *OCP* 42 (1976), 296–303; and A.IV.1 below. We are still in need of a fully systematic and comparative chronologico-geographical study of the catechumena/gynaeceum terminology in the archaeological and literary (including liturgical) sources.

εῖς μετὰ τῶν θείων ἀγιασμάτων διέρχεσθαι κατὰ τὸν Χερούβικὸν ὅμνον, 7. καὶ θυμιάν τοὺς ἐν τούτῳ ἵσως ὄντας τάφους καὶ ἀγίους, 8. καὶ τελευτὰς ἀγίων εὐχῶν ποιεῖν· 9. ἢ κανὶ μετὰ ἐπισκοπικῆς ἐπιτροπῆς τοὺς τοιούτους τόπους ἀφορίζεσθαι, ὥστε ἀποκριματίστως ἴστασθαι ἐν αὐτοῖς τὰς ἀκαθάρτους γυναῖκας.¹¹²

such unclean women are to stand should not directly occupy space in churches, 6. so that the priests may pass through with the divine gifts during the Cherubic Hymn, 7. and incense the tombs and saints that might be in this [church space], 8. and complete the holy prayers; 9. or that under the bishop's direction such places [not directly in the churches] should be set apart so that the unclean women may stand in them without condemnation.

The ambiguities in this text result from Balsamon's failure to use what we (anachronistically) might like to consider "standard" terminology for the antechambers of the Byzantine church (αὐλή, ἔξωνάρθηξ, νάρθηξ).¹¹³ Though this reflects the Byzantine tendency to eschew "ordinary" words in literary works, it is less usual in juridical and theological writings. Balsamon refers to two spaces, the προαύλια and πρόναοι, which I have translated neutrally as "forecourts" and "vestibules" so as not to preempt their meaning in advance. The forecourts (προαύλια) are "common" (κοινά)—that is, ordinary or "profane," not "sacred"—space, whereas the vestibule (πρόναος) is set aside for use by the women (3). Just what spaces is Balsamon referring to? Though not frequent, both προαύλια¹¹⁴ and πρόναος¹¹⁵ are used by other authors, and Balsamon also uses πρόναος in another context, as we shall see below.

Let us take the terms one by one:

1. Προαύλια. This is a generic term with several meanings. Some sources use αὐλία in the plural to designate the Constantinopolitan narthex.¹¹⁶ But in Theophanes Continuatus' *Chronographia V, Life of Basil I* 85, the προαύλια is clearly the atrium or large unroofed forecourt before the west entrance of the church (πρὸς ἐσπέραν μὲν καὶ κατ' αὐτὰ τὸν ναοῦ τὰ προαύλια),¹¹⁷ which in Constantinopolitan sources is given a variety of names:¹¹⁸ αὐλή,¹¹⁹ or, by synecdoche, λουτήρ (pool)¹²⁰ or even φύλη (fountain),¹²¹ after the traditional

¹¹²In epist. S. Dionysii Alexandrini ad Basilidem episcopum, canon 2, PG 138:465C–468A. I am grateful to Sharon Gerstel for suggesting that I take a second look at my earlier translation and interpretation of this text (Taft, *Great Entrance*, 199–200), both of which I substantially modify here; and especially to Jeffrey Featherstone for his suggestions on how to translate and interpret the text.

¹¹³See Strube, *Die westliche Eingangsseite*, n. 629 and the index under "atrium" and "narthex."

¹¹⁴Cf. Lampe 1138 and the texts adduced below.

¹¹⁵C. Du Cange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae graecitatis* (Lyons, 1688; repr. Graz, 1958), 1245–46; L. Clugnet, *Dictionnaire grec-français des noms liturgiques en usage dans l'Église grecque* (Paris, 1895), 128, and the texts adduced below.

¹¹⁶Strube, *Die westliche Eingangsseite*, 41–42.

¹¹⁷Theophanes Continuatus, ed. Bekker, 327, line 4; Mango, *Art*, 195.

¹¹⁸Strube, *Die westliche Eingangsseite*, "atrium" in the index.

¹¹⁹Ibid., and Paul Silentiary, *Descriptio S. Sophiae* 590–93.

¹²⁰Strube, *Die westliche Eingangsseite*, 40–46, esp. 43 n. 128; C. Mango and J. Parker, "A Twelfth-Century Description of St. Sophia," *DOP* 14 (1960), 236 (text), cf. 242 (commentary). This term is also used for the baptistry: Mateos, *Typicon*, I, 182.

¹²¹*Narratio de S. Sophia* 26, in Preger, *Scriptores*, 103, line 4; cf. Mango, *Art*, 101. This term is also used for the baptismal font: Mateos, *Typicon*, I, 182.

atrium fountain.¹²² Pseudo-Sophronius, *Life of St. Mary of Egypt* 22–23, is best interpreted in the same way.¹²³ In Balsamon's text cited above, however, it is not clear whether προαύλια (3) designates the atrium before the facade at the west end of early Byzantine churches of the capital, or whether Balsamon is using the term more generically, for the other colonnades and porticoes before the other entrances and even surrounding the building of churches like Hagia Sophia¹²⁴ and the Nea.¹²⁵ John Damascene (ca. 675–ca. 753/4) could well be using προαύλια for the atrium too, when he refers to an image of the Theotokos, also in Alexandria, “in the forecourt of the Great Church” (τὴν ἐν τῷ προσκυνάσθι τῆς Μεγάλης ἐκκλησίας τῆς Θεομήτορος εἰκόνα),¹²⁶ though in fact this could mean any forehall of the cathedral, including the narthex.

2. Πρόναος. This term is generally taken to mean narthex,¹²⁷ as in the *vita* of Maximus Confessor (cited below, A.IV.1), and Balsamon himself employs it elsewhere for what seems to be the narthex of Hagia Sophia. Commenting on canon 76 of Trullo, which forbids commerce within the sacred precincts of a church,¹²⁸ he recounts how the Constantinopolitan patriarchs ordered buyers and sellers expelled “from both the Augsteon¹²⁹ and the areas around the πρόναος of the most-holy Great Church of God” (ἀπό τε τοῦ Αὐγουστεῶνος καὶ τῶν προσεχεστέρων μερῶν τῷ προνάῳ τῆς ἀγιωτάτης τοῦ Θεοῦ Μεγάλης ἐκκλησίας).¹³⁰ Some protested that “the canon names as church enclosures the pronaos of each church, but not the fountains and the other parts of the sacred basilicas attached to them” (ώς περιβόλους ἐκκλησιαστικοὺς ὁ κανὼν ὀνομάζει τοὺς προνάους ἐκάστου ναοῦ, οὐ μὴν τὰς φιάλας καὶ τὰ ἔτερα μέρη τῶν θείων ναῶν τὰ συνηνωμένα αὐτοῖς). Since it would not occur to any Christian to engage in trade in the middle of the church or in its vestibule (ἐν μεσονάῳ ἢ προνάῳ), Balsamon continues, the real problem is to distinguish what is “within the sacred enclosures” (ἔνδον τῶν ιερῶν περιβόλων) of the

¹²² Mateos, *Typicon*, I, 324; Strube, *Die westliche Eingangsseite*, 34ff, 43, 60, and nn. 128, 209; Mango and Parker, “Twelfth-Century Description of St. Sophia,” 242.

¹²³ PG 87.3:3113AB (= BHG 1042); “Life of St. Mary of Egypt,” trans. M. Kouli, in Talbot, *Holy Women*, 82–83. In the lively scenario, on September 14, Mary, not yet converted from her dissolute life, tries to push her way into the church with the rest of the crowd to witness the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. She crosses the forecourt of the basilica (τὰ τοῦ οἴκου προαύλια) and gets as far as the threshold of the church doors (τὴν φλιὰν τῆς θύρας) when a hidden force pushes her back into the προαύλια, preventing her entrance (εἴσοδος). So she is forced to stay in the προαύλια, unable to witness the ritual. In this case προαύλια must mean the atrium. Mary is unable to see the service, which would not necessarily be true from the narthex. Besides, the whole point of the story is that Mary cannot force her way into the church. She crosses the courtyard but is stopped in her tracks at the threshold of the church because of her sins.

¹²⁴ See the next paragraph; also Paul Silentary, *Descriptio S. Sophiae* 605; Mango, *Art*, 85; and B.II below.

¹²⁵ See A.III.9.i; also Theophanes Continuatus, *Chronographia V, De Basilio Macedone* 86, ed. Bekker, 328, lines 2ff; Mango, *Art*, 195.

¹²⁶ *Ep. ad Theophilum imperatorem de sanctis et venerandis imaginibus* 6, PG 95:353A.

¹²⁷ See note 115 above.

¹²⁸ G. Nedungatt and M. Featherstone, eds., *The Council in Trullo Revisited*, Kanonika 6 (Rome, 1995), 157.

¹²⁹ The forum between H. Sophia and the palace, by the 12th century considered the south forecourt of H. Sophia: Mango, *Brazen House*, 42–47 and figs. 1–5, 28; Mango and Parker, “Twelfth-Century Description of St. Sophia,” 242.

¹³⁰ PG 137:773BC. I find no trace of such patriarchal edicts in the patriarchal registers (see note 134 below) or in J. Oudot, *Patriarchatus Constantinopoli acta selecta*, 2 vols., Fonti codificazione canonica orientale, ser. 2, fasc. 3–4 (Vatican City, 1941; Grottaferrata, 1967).

church from the rest of the enclosures (*περίβολοι*) within its precincts.¹³¹ Among the latter places “otherwise joined” (*ἀλλοτρόπως κοινωθέντας*) to the sacred precincts—that is, areas contiguous to the church but not designated for exclusively religious purposes—he lists

τὰ λουτρὰ καὶ τὸν κῆπον καὶ τὰς στοάς
τὰς συνηνωμένας τὰς ἐκκλησίας. . .
Ταῦτα γὰρ μέρη μὲν τῆς ἐκκλησίας λογί-
ζονται, ἵεροὶ δὲ περίβολοι οὐ λεχθή-
σονται.¹³²

the baths and the gardens and the colonnades attached to the church. . . These are called part of the church but are not said to be sacred enclosures.

So the pronaos where nonmenstruating women can stand is part of the church and its sacred precincts, not just one of its forecourts or outer enclosures. Indeed, along with the nave, it is one of the two parts of the church that Balsamon names as areas no one would think of considering otherwise. Further, he says the pronaos was separate from both the *γυναικεῖα* (1) and the *προαύλια* (3). The latter were “common,” that is, not for sacred use and therefore accessible to everyone without restriction (3), part of what Balsamon’s commentary on Trullan canon 76 places outside the sacred precincts (though Balsamon does not use the term *προαύλια* there). The pronaos, however, was restricted space, considered part of the church, which is why Balsamon says those excluded from church by penance could not stand there, except for the “hearers” (4),¹³³ that is, those in the last stages of their penance, one step away from reintegration into full communion with the community.¹³⁴

¹³¹The 12th-century *Ekphrasis* (lines 34–35) also distinguishes between “enclosure” (*περίβολον*) and “holy place” (*τὸ ιερόν*), i.e., the church proper: Mango and Parker, “Twelfth-Century Description of St. Sophia,” 236.

¹³²PG 137: 773C–776A.

¹³³On the hearers, see J. Grotz, *Die Entwicklung des Bußstufenswesens in der vornicänischen Kirche* (Freiburg, 1955), “Bußstufen” and “Hörende” in the index; also J. A. Favazza, *The Order of Penitents* (Collegeville, Minn., 1988), 130–35, 165–66.

¹³⁴Canonical anthologies and commentaries, like liturgical sources, are often anachronistically antiquarian, preserving reference to practices long fallen into disuse. So the mere mention of “hearers” (see the previous note) and penitents by canonist Balsamon does not prove that the categories of public penance were still alive and well at that late date. In the absence of any adequate historical study of public penitence in Byzantium anterior to the liturgical manuscripts, Balsamon’s references to types and classes of ecclesiastical penance and the exclusion of penitents from church attendance (4–5) are not easy to interpret. On the one hand, we know that the Byzantine liturgy once prayed over and dismissed penitents at the end of the Liturgy of the Word, as was common in late antique liturgy: cf. *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII, 9:1–11, 35:2–36:1, 38:1, in *Les Constitutions apostoliques*, ed. Metzger, SC 336:162–67, 246–47, 250–51. Furthermore, the Council of Constantinople IV (870 A.D.) still refers to public penance (*Acta ix*, Mansi 16:152D–153A), and the patriarchal registers continue to record penitential legislation right until 1338: cf. V. Grumel, *Les Regestes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*, I: *Les actes des patriarches*, fasc. 1–3, Le Patriarcat byzantin, ser. 1 (Kadiköy-Istanbul, 1932, 1936; Bucharest, 1947); fasc. 4, ed. V. Laurent (Paris, 1971); fasc. 1 (2nd ed., Paris, 1972)—hereafter *RegPatr*—with references to the documents, which are numbered consecutively throughout: 12, 49, 540, 790, 982.5, 1037, 2007, 2180, 2183. So right until the end of Byzantium there were sinners in penance who were excluded from the sacraments in some formal and more or less public manner. But how this discipline was related to the older “public” or “canonical penance” is not clear. For by the time of the earliest liturgical manuscript, the 8th-century Barberini 336, the liturgical prayers over and dismissal of penitents have already disappeared from the liturgy (van de Paverd, *Meßliturgie*, 453–60), though there remains a prayer to be said at the end of public(?) penance: S. Parenti and E. Velkovska, eds., *L’Eucologio Barberini gr. 336 (ff. 1–263)*, Bibliotheca EphL, Subsidia 80 (Rome, 1995), § 202.1; cf. J. Goar, *Εὐχολόγιον sive Rituale Graecorum . . .*, 2nd

It was destined for the nonmenstruating women permitted to attend the liturgy (3). This pronaos must have been a narthex before one of the entrances into the nave, and thus in direct communication with the main body of the church and the performance of the liturgy there. Otherwise how could Balsamon consider the women there to be assisting at the liturgy, as he certainly does (1–3)? The identification of this pronaos with such a narthex is further strengthened by Balsamon's affirmation that this space was decorated with iconography (1), and, indeed, was “liturgical space” used by the clergy during the celebration of services (6–8). As for the women in menstruation, forbidden to attend church, they could stand only in a pronaos that did not communicate directly with the church proper (5); otherwise the bishop should set apart another place for them (9).

If this attempt at terminological precision is valid—and nothing was more foreign to the Byzantines than terminological precision—then Balsamon's text cited above seems to be saying the following:

1. In the twelfth century a pronaos or inner narthex of some Byzantine churches was the place assigned to women permitted to attend church (3).
2. Balsamon complains that it had become common for menstruating women to stand there as well (1), on the pretext that they were “not attending church” (2).
3. Balsamon insists that menstruating women are allowed only in a more distant pronaos, separate from the church proper (5).
4. If a church is lacking such a separate pronaos, the bishop is to reserve some other separate place for them to stand without condemnation (9), so that during the singing of the Cherubicon, that is, during the Great Entrance, the clergy can pass through the pronaos bearing the holy gifts (6), or incense the tombs and sacred images there (7), without fear of “ritual contamination.” Balsamon must mean here the pronaos of the women allowed to attend church, for it is hardly imaginable that the clergy passed through space restricted to those considered “ritually impure” at one of the most solemn moments of the Divine Liturgy.

ed. (Venice, 1730; repr. Graz, 1960), 536. H.-F. Schmid, “Pénitentiels byzantins et occidentaux,” *Actes du VIe Congrès international d'études byzantines* (Paris, 1951), 359–63, shows that Byzantine penitentials, almost all attributed to Constantinopolitan Patriarch John the Faster (582–595) but none of which are in fact earlier than the end of the 8th century, are “des documents authentiques de la disparition de la pénitence publique dans l'Église byzantine” (*ibid.*, 361; on the penitentials cf. also *RegPatr* 270). On the question of penance in the Byzantine liturgical sources, see, most recently, M. Arranz, “Évolution des rites d'incorporation et de réadmission dans l'Église selon l'Euchologe byzantin,” in *Gestes et paroles dans les diverses familles liturgiques*, Conférences S.-Serge—XXIVe Semaine d'études liturgiques, Paris, June 28–July 1, 1977, *Bibliotheca EphL*, Subsidia 14 (Rome, 1978), 68–75; *idem*, “Les sacrements de l'ancien Euchologe constantinopolitain,” II: 1, *OCP* 56 (1990), 283–322; 2.1–2, *OCP* 57 (1991), 87–143, 309–29; 2.3, *OCP* 58 (1992), 23–82; 3.1, *OCP* 58 (1992), 423–59; 3.2–3, *OCP* 59 (1993), 63–89, 357–86; 4, *OCP* 61 (1995), 425–76 (hereafter “Sacrements II”); *idem*, *I Penitenziali bizantini: Il Protokanonarion o Kanonarion Primitivo di Giovanni Monaco e Diacono e il Deuterokanonarion o “Secondo Kanonarion” di Basilio Monaco*, Kanonika 3 (Rome, 1993)—to be used, however, with the corrections indicated in the reviews of S. Parenti, *BZ* 88 (1995), 474–81, and M. Kohlbacher, *OC* 79 (1995), 236–40.

5. Still, sections 6–8 are not altogether clear from a liturgical standpoint. Balsamon clearly states that the priests incense the tombs in the pronaos where the women are (7), or pass through it bearing the gifts during the Great Entrance procession (6)—which is one more reason why the women in menstruation should not “directly occupy space in the churches” (5). But after the Great Entrance the priests “complete the holy prayers” (8), which must mean the preanaphoral rites, anaphora, and so on, that take place in the sanctuary, and certainly not in the pronaos. Furthermore, though one can easily imagine the ministers going into the traditional western inner narthex to incense the tombs and sacred images there, it is by no means clear what the priests could be doing passing through that narthex during the Great Entrance—unless *Balsamon means not the narthex across the west end of the church but a “women’s narthex” leading into the north aisle* through which the clergy bearing the gifts might pass when entering from an outside skeuophylakion (see below, B.II). Both Hagia Sophia and the Nea Church, at least, had another narthex besides the usual one at the west end (above, A.III.9.i; below, B.II.4).

12. Ignatius of Smolensk (1392)

Gallery curtains and their rationale are confirmed at the end of the fourteenth century by the Russian pilgrim Ignatius of Smolensk, who attended the coronation of Manuel II (1391–1425) and his consort in Hagia Sophia on February 11, 1392. Here is how he describes the seclusion of the women:

1. I went at daybreak, so I was there [for the coronation]. 2. A multitude of people were there, 3. the men inside the holy church (*внутрь святыи церкви*), 4. the women in the galleries (*на полатах*). 5. [The arrangement] was very artful; all who were of the female sex stood behind silken drapes so that none of the [male] congregation could see the adornment of their faces, while they [the women] could see everything that was to be seen.¹³⁵

This is the only Byzantine text I know of that puts *all* the women in the galleries (5) in Constantinople, with only the men in the nave (3), though Chorikios of Gaza (below, A.III.14) witnesses to the same in Palestine much earlier (ca. 536–548).

13. Patriarch Athanasius I (ca. 1309)

By the beginning of the fourteenth century, the placement of the women in the galleries seems to have been the remnant of a deteriorating practice—or maybe the transparent silken curtains were added because of the situation stigmatized in the same century by twice-patriarch (1289–93, 1303–9) Athanasius I. Toward the end of his second patriarchate, Athanasius’ letter 45, written to invite the emperor to attend the traditional August 15 Dormition festivities at Hagia Sophia,¹³⁶ speaks with approval of the emperor assisting at the liturgy in the galleries, but discourages the presence of noblewomen there:

1. The piety of your God-guarded majesty, which is motivated by your love of God (and on account of which I invite you to come to the shrine of the Great Wisdom of God), is

¹³⁵ Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 104–5 (text), 420–21 (commentary).

¹³⁶ In the 10th-century *typikon* of the Great Church, Blachernai is the station for this feast: Mateos, *Typicon*, II, 368–73.

a great honor for the Church of Christ. . . . **2.** Thus <the Church> gladly throws open all Her doors, joyfully receiving you Her son, even in the catechumena themselves, if you should so bid (*καὶ δήπου καὶ τοῖς κατηχουμενείοις αὐτοῖς εἰ κελεύσειας*). **3.** But it seems to me that we ought to refuse to receive the noblewomen there, **4.** because they do not take their place in the catechumena (*ἐν τοῖς κατηχουμενείοις*) from piety, as if they eagerly seized upon the holiday and the ascent to the holy shrine as an opportunity for prayer and consecration, but really for the sake of puffing themselves up and showing themselves off (not to mention for the sake of a sensual appearance), not in a downcast manner that would inspire mercy, but with a haughty and insolent attitude. Also they bedeck themselves with gold and precious jewels, and make a display of their clothes, failing to realize that embellishment from without rather than from within is not praiseworthy, especially beautifying oneself with paints; **5.** and in addition they try to find ways to avoid standing with the other people that they might pray together, but stand high above the crowd, above their very prostrations. But if perhaps they would be willing to gather for worship together with the rest of the Orthodox, and to ask pardon for their actions with a humble spirit . . . the Church will always open Her gates to these women, if they behave in this manner, as worthy indeed to be called Her daughters. . . . **6.** And let not ancient custom be cast in my face by certain people as justification, if different practice prevailed in the past, because there is nothing more fitting and hallowed by age than piety and virtue and pure fear of God.¹³⁷

From this we can glean the following:

1. In Hagia Sophia (**1**) the emperor sometimes—hence not always—assists at services “even in the catechumena” if he so wishes (**2**).
2. Noblewomen are in the galleries too (**3**), if for less than pious motives (**4**).
3. Since Athanasius says it would be better were these noblewomen elsewhere during the services, this must have been a realistic possibility. So women were clearly not restricted to the galleries.
4. One can infer the same from the context of Athanasius’ complaint. Since the separation of the sexes at worship was still operative at this time, he could hardly berate the noblewomen for separating themselves from the men, for *wherever the women were they would be separated from the men of the congregation*. So Athanasius’ reproof of the noblewomen separating themselves from and looking down from the galleries upon the rest of the praying community *can only mean they were separating themselves from the other women assisting at the service below*.
5. Athanasius implies as much when he asserts that reserving the galleries to the women was a custom both ancient *and different* (**6**)—different, that is, from the current usage then in force—and one he opposes for reasons not unlike the motive for putting the women in the galleries in the first place: *cherchez la femme*.
6. It would seem, then, that by Athanasius’ time the galleries were reserved for the imperial entourage and for noblewomen, while those Athanasius literally calls the *hoi polloi* (**5**) assisted in the nave and aisles below.

¹³⁷ Slightly modified from A.-M. Talbot, ed., *The Correspondence of Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople*, CFHB 7 = DOT 3 (Washington, D.C., 1975), 94–95 (text), cf. 353–54 (commentary). Numbers and Greek interpolated to facilitate reference.

14. Beyond the Great Church

Beyond the capital we find no uniformity in the sources concerning the placement of women in church. During liturgy in Antioch as described by presbyter John Chrysostom before 398, it is clear that the women attended services from the ground floor together with the men—which is why, apparently, Chrysostom had a hard time keeping them apart.¹³⁸ Further south in Gaza, however, the arrangement was like what we saw in Constantinople. Ca. 536–548 the rhetorician Chorikios of Gaza, in *Laudatio Marciani II*, 47, describes in the church of St. Stephen two tribunes for the women directly over the ground-floor aisles, doubtless flanking the nave north and south:

Τοῦ δὲ μὴ τοῖς ἀνδράσι γυναικῶν ὅμιλον
ἀναμίγνυσθαι, καίτοι τῆς κάτω θέσεως
πλῆθος χωρούσης ἐκάτερον οὐδενὸς πιέζον-
τος, διπλῆν εἰργάσω γυναικωνῖτιν ἐξ ἵσου
μὲν ταῖς κάτω μηκυνομένην στοαῖς, ἐξ ἵσου
δὲ τούταις εὐρυνομένην, μόνῳ δὲ λειπο-
μένην τῷ ὑψει, ὃσον αὐτῆς οἱ τὴν στέγην
ἀνέχοντες κίονες τῶν ὑποκειμένων
ήττωνται.¹³⁹

That the female congregation should not be mingled with the men, though there is room enough on the ground for both without crowding, you have constructed a double gynaeceum, its length and width equal to those of the aisles below, but somewhat inferior in height to the extent that the columns supporting the roof are shorter than the ones beneath them.¹⁴⁰

This text—not a source for the liturgy of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, however—agrees with the much later (1392 A.D.) Ignatius of Smolensk (above, A.III.12), the only Byzantine text to affirm the complete separation of the sexes, placing *all the women* in the galleries. Indeed, Chorikios makes it clear that segregation was the deliberate intention, since there was enough space to accommodate both men and women on the ground floor.

An Italo-Greek Byzantine liturgical manuscript shows that sexism extended even to the dead. A rubric of the monastic *σχηματολόγιον* in the eleventh-century codex Grotta-ferrata ΓΒ XLIII (fol. 108r–v) specifies:

καὶ εἰ ἔστιν ἡγούμενος ἢ πρεσβύτερος ἢ δι-
άκονος ὁ τελευτικός, τίθεται τὸ λείψανον
αὐτοῦ κατενώπιον τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου . . . εἰ
δὲ μοναχός ἔστι τίθεται πρὸς τὸ δεξιὸν
μέρος τῆς ἐκκλησίας, εἰ δὲ γυνὴ ἔστιν πρὸς
τὸ εὐώνυμον.¹⁴¹

And if the deceased is a hegumen or presbyter or deacon, his bier is placed in front of the sanctuary . . . but if he is a simple monk it is placed on the right side of the church, but on the left if it is a woman.

This placement of the bier undoubtedly reflects the fact that the men and women stood separately in church, men on the right, women on the left. A careful scrutiny of the hundreds of extant Byzantine liturgical manuscripts would doubtless turn up numerous instances of the same or similar practices right up to our own day.

IV. Gynaeceum, Catechumena, Curtains

The documentation thus far adduced—and I have tried to be as complete as possible—presents several obvious problems of nomenclature and interpretation that need

¹³⁸ See D.II below.

¹³⁹ R. Foerster and E. Richsteig, eds., *Choricii Gazaei opera*, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Leipzig, 1929; repr. Stuttgart, 1972), 40.

¹⁴⁰ Mango, *Art*, 71.

¹⁴¹ I owe this text to S. Parenti.

to be addressed before considering the place in church assigned to special categories of women.

1. Gynaeceum, Catechumens, Catechumenate, Catechumena

The evidence for where women attended the liturgy in Byzantine churches has confronted us with two terms, “gynaeceum,” or “place of the women,” and “catechumena” (in Greek, κατηχούμενα, κατηχουμενεῖα, κατηχουμενία), almost always in the plural, to designate the galleries that typically ran around the Byzantine church on three sides, west, north, and south. Why is a place in church often designated as being for the women, and where women are actually sighted attending liturgy, called “catechumena” when no single source ever actually places a catechumen there?

Though a resolution of this issue is beyond the scope of this study, the following details emerge from a summary review of the available evidence:

1. In what seems to be the earliest extant reference to the church galleries as “catechumena” (κατηχουμενα), the Syriac *Life of John of Hephaestopolis* in Egypt, written in 586/8 by the Monophysite John of Ephesus (ca. 507–586/8), describes St. John at a church in Tralles secretly ordaining Monophysite clergy in the galleries, which they “were given permission to occupy,” John says, “since we were a large party, and there were distinguished gentlemen among us.”¹⁴² Tralles is inland east of Ephesus in the province of Asia, hence within the orbit of Constantinople. John’s secretly Monophysite party, clearly male from the context (he was certainly not ordaining women), confers these ordinations, the *vita* informs us, “while those [the Chalcedonian Orthodox] below were performing the service,” that is, during a liturgical celebration of some sort. It is obvious, therefore, that in the sixth century, in a region not far from the capital, the catechumena were the exclusive preserve of neither the catechumens nor the women, since men of quality, at least, could be permitted to use them even during the liturgical services.
2. Byzantine church galleries are commonly (though by no means exclusively)¹⁴³ called “catechumena” from the sixth century on.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴²*Lives of the Eastern Saints* 25, ed. E. W. Brooks, PO 18.4:538. For the dates of this document, cf. PO 17.1:iv–vii. Strube, *Die westliche Eingangssseite*, 92, says the Greek name “catechumena” for the galleries first appears at the end of the 7th century, but the Syriac here is clearly a translation from the Greek.

¹⁴³In addition to nine of the fourteen mostly Constantinopolitan documents already cited (A.III.2–8, 10, 12), cf. *Vita S. Nicolai Sionitae* (d. ca. 564), 80, ed. G. Anrich, *Hagios Nikolaos: Der heilige Nikolaos in der griechischen Kirche*, I: *Texte* (Leipzig-Berlin, 1913; repr. Hildesheim, 1965), 55.8–9 (= BHG 1347, cf. p. 151); Leo VI (886–912), Novel 73 in the following note; Ps.-Nicephorus, canon 18, refers to the galleries as the γυναικίτης; J. B. Pitra, *Iuris ecclesiastici Graecorum historia et monumenta*, II (Rome, 1868), 329. Pitra translates this as “atrium,” which is certainly mistaken: Ruggieri, “Katēchoumenon,” 390–91 n. 4.

¹⁴⁴In addition to the sources cited in the previous note, see the *vita* of St. Theodore of Sykeon (d. 613), 55.14–15, 154.10, 161.38–63 (= BHG 1748–49, after 641 A.D.), ed. A.-J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, 2 vols., SubsHag 48 (Brussels, 1970), I, 47, 124, 139–40; II, 50–51, 130, 144–45, 206; Maximus Confessor, *Disputatio Bizyae = Acta*, II, 25 (656 A.D.; for date: P. Sherwood, *An Annotated Date-List of the Works of Maximus the Confessor*, Studia Anselmiana 30 [Rome, 1952], 56, 59), PG 90:161A; Council in Trullo (692 A.D.), canon 97, Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Trullo*, 179 = Joannou, *Discipline*, I.1:234–35; *Miracula S. Artemii* 31 (martyr

3. We see women in the galleries in Constantinople before this denomination becomes current (see documents above, A.III.2–7).
4. Though by the end of the seventh century the catechumenate in Constantinople seems to have stagnated, as we shall see shortly, the galleries continue to be called “catechumena” (see documents above, A.III.9–10, 13).¹⁴⁵
5. Nomenclature to the contrary notwithstanding, we have no evidence whatever, from either before or after this designation of the galleries as “catechumena” became current, that the galleries were reserved for the use of the catechumens.
6. In fact, we see the galleries employed for just about every imaginable purpose,¹⁴⁶ legitimate or not, including even temporary lodgings¹⁴⁷ and sexual dalliance.¹⁴⁸ Women and the imperial party attend liturgy in the galleries and have the sacrament brought to them there.¹⁴⁹ An abbess with a flow of blood could attend services in the galleries of her monastery church.¹⁵⁰ Ordinations to the priesthood,¹⁵¹ loyalty oaths,¹⁵² ghostly counsel, miraculous cures, and exorcisms were all administered there.¹⁵³ They were used for distributing

under Julian, ca. 331–363 = *BHG* 173), written under Constans II (d. 668), ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Varia Graeca sacra* (St. Petersburg, 1909), 44.25; cf. C. Mango, “On the History of the *Templon* and the Martyrion of St. Artemios at Constantinople,” *Σοργαφ* 10 (1979), 41; the cure of Blessed Martha, hegumena in Monembasia (9th–10th century?), as recounted by Paul, bishop of the same town in Peloponnesus (before Dec. 15, 955–after 959): J. Wortley, ed., *Les récits édifiants de Paul, évêque de Monembasie, et d'autres auteurs, Sources d'histoire médiévale* (Paris, 1987), 14/XVI.1–3, pp. 110–13 (= *BHG* 1175)—I owe this reference to Sharon Gerstel. Numerous later references to the use of the term “catechumena” are listed in Ruggieri, “*Katēchoumenon*”; cf. idem, *Byzantine Religious Architecture (582–867): Its History and Structural Elements*, OCA 237 (Rome, 1991), 247ff and n. 300; Du Cange, *Glossarium*, 621–22; Lampe 733. By the 9th century, Leo VI (886–912), Novel 73, condemning those who cohabit with women in the galleries, continues to call them ὑπερῷα but says they “are called by many ‘catechumena’”: P. Noailles and A. Dain, eds., *Les Nouvelles de Léon VI le Sage, Nouvelle collection de textes et documents* (Paris, 1944), 261; cf. S. Troianou, “The Canons of the Trullan Council in the Novels of Leo VI,” in Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Trullo*, 195.

¹⁴⁵ See also the literature and sources cited in notes 111, 143–44.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Mathews, *Early Churches*, 128–29; Ruggieri, “*Katēchoumenon*.”

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Theodore of Sykeon’s *vita*, 161, ed. Festugière, I, 139–40; II, 144; *Miracula S. Artemii* 44.25 (note 144 above). Canons forbidding this are incorporated into Byzantine legislation: *The Rudder (Pedalion) . . . or All the Sacred and Divine Canons*, trans. D. Cummings (Chicago, 1957), 405–6.

¹⁴⁸ Leo VI, Novel 73 (note 144 above).

¹⁴⁹ See documents below, A.III.9.

¹⁵⁰ Wortley, *Récits*, 14/XVI.1–3, pp. 110–13.

¹⁵¹ Above, note 142.

¹⁵² The scenario from an Annunciation (March 25) liturgy in Chalkoprataenia during the first patriarchate of Photios (858–867), recounted in the mid-10th-century *Chronicle* of Symeon the Logothete (see A. Kazhdan, “Symeon the Logothete,” *ODB* III:1982–83), has the patriarch bring communion to the imperial party in the galleries, as was customary (see A.III.9). On this occasion the party included Michael III (842–867), his uncle Bardas Caesar (d. 866), and Basil I (867–886), then still *parakoimomenos*, or guardian of the emperor’s bedchamber (see A. Kazhdan, “*Parakoimomenos*,” *ODB* III:1584). Michael and Basil take an oath not to harm Bardas, and seal it with communion. The story is repeated in several redactions: Symeon Magister, *Annales*, *De Michaeli et Theodori* 40, and Georgius Monachus, *Vitae imperatorum recentiorum*, *De Michaeli et Theodori* 26, in *Theophanes Continuatus*, ed. Bekker, 676–77; Leo Grammaticus, *Chronographia*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB (Bonn, 1842), 243; cf. Mathews, *Early Churches*, 31–32. I owe most of these references to Jeffrey Featherstone.

¹⁵³ Theodore of Sykeon’s *vita*, 154, 161, ed. Festugière, I, 124, 139–40; II, 130, 144–45; Wortley, *Récits*, 14/XVI, pp. 110–15.

clergy stipends (*roga*),¹⁵⁴ for imperial receptions and dinners,¹⁵⁵ for sessions of every sort of ecclesiastical tribunal and meeting of the standing synod, and so on.¹⁵⁶ Oratories and the imperial apartment, refectory, and loge-metatorion could all be located there.¹⁵⁷

In short, we are faced with a collision of nomenclature and fact: the galleries may be called “catechumena,” but they seem more the place of the women than of the catechumens—and indeed, the place of much more besides.

Is there any way out of this impasse? As Mathews said, there must have been some reason for the name “catechumena.”¹⁵⁸ And in fact the Constantinopolitan galleries were ideally suited for a category like the catechumens that was once dismissed from church halfway through the service. Their system of stairs exiting outside the nave made it possible for those in the galleries to leave without having to pass through the main body of the church.¹⁵⁹

In this whole discussion, no one has yet taken adequate account of the history of the catechumenate in Constantinople.¹⁶⁰ The Council in Trullo (692) is the last time catechumens appear in Byzantine synodal legislation.¹⁶¹ Later canonical collections may incorporate previously existing legislation regarding the catechumenate, but such anthologies continue to reproduce earlier texts long after they had lost all force. Furthermore, it is not altogether clear how effective an institution the catechumenate had remained even at the time of Trullo. The ambiguity of other seventh-century witnesses already shows a weakening of the tradition. As late as 628–630, Maximus Confessor, in *Mystagogia* 14–15, seems to speak of the dismissal of the catechumens at the Byzantine Divine Liturgy as if it were an effective reality,¹⁶² and his *vita* still refers to “the prostration of the unbaptized in the pronaos” (ἀμνήτων ἐν τῷ προνάῳ πρόπτωσις).¹⁶³ But in his *Scholia in librum De ecclesi-*

¹⁵⁴ According to the early 12th-century Praxapostolos manuscript Dresden A 104; see A. A. Dmitrievskij, *Древнейшие патриаршие типиконы святоогрбский, иерусалимский и Великой Константинопольской Церкви: Критико-библиографическое исследование* (Kiev, 1907), 144, 159–60; cf. Darrouzès, *Recherches* (as in note 70 above), 47.

¹⁵⁵ Above, A.III.9.a, c–f; also the reception for Patriarch Ignatius on Nov. 23, 867: Nicetas Paphlago, *Vita S. Ignatii archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani*, PG 105:544b; Pseudo-Kodinos, *De officiis* 7, in *Traité des offices*, ed. J. Verpeaux (Paris, 1966), 269.

¹⁵⁶ Between 1019 and 1192, there are fully twenty-five references in *RegPatr* 826, 844, 869, 896, 925–27, 1000, 1007, 1014–15, 1055, 1063, 1065, 1067, 1068, 1073, 1077–78, 1085–86, 1111, 1119, 1179–80. Cf. Darrouzès, *Recherches*, 429.

¹⁵⁷ Texts above, A.III.5, 7–9.

¹⁵⁸ Mathews, *Early Churches*, 129–30.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 23, 49–51, 83, 87, 91–94, 108, 129, 152.

¹⁶⁰ We need a new history of the catechumenate in Byzantium. Meanwhile, in addition to Arranz’s massive work on the liturgical documents—M. Arranz, “Les sacrements de l’ancien Euchologe constantinopolitain,” I: 1, *OCP* 48 (1982), 284–335; 2, *OCP* 49 (1983), 42–90; 3, *OCP* 49 (1983), 284–302; 4, *OCP* 50 (1984), 43–64; 5, *OCP* 50 (1984), 372–97; 6, *OCP* 51 (1985), 60–86; 7, *OCP* 52 (1986), 145–78; 8, *OCP* 53 (1987), 59–106; 9, *OCP* 55 (1989), 33–62; 10, *OCP* 55 (1989), 317–38 (hereafter “Sacrements I”)—the older study of A. Almazov, *История чинопоследования крещения и миропомазания* (Kazan, 1884), remains useful.

¹⁶¹ Canons 78 and 95, Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Trullo*, 159, 174–77 = Joannou, *Discipline*, I.1:215, 230–33.

¹⁶² PG 91:692–93; date from Sherwood, *Annotated Date-List*, 32, 61; cf. Mathews, *Early Churches*, 128, 152.

¹⁶³ R. Devreesse, “La vie de S. Maxime le confesseur et ses récensions,” *AB* 46 (1928), 22, line 6 (= *BHG* 1234).

astica hierarchia of Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus calls the dismissal of the catechumens a dead letter (*οὐ γίνεται*).¹⁶⁴ And neither Procopius nor the Silentiary ever mention catechumens in Hagia Sophia,¹⁶⁵ though they go on and on about the galleries.

Similarly, continued reference to the catechumenate in liturgical texts of itself proves nothing. Liturgies are (or were) notoriously conservative, continuing to go through the motions of a ritual long after it has lost any relevance to reality. Though catechumens have not been dismissed for a millennium, the text of their dismissal by the deacon continues to be printed in Byzantine liturgical books, and in some places is still proclaimed. If one could take the *typikon* of the Great Church as a mirror of actual practice, it would seem that a vestigial catechumenate for children of Orthodox parents and for converts continued to exist in Constantinople as late as the tenth century,¹⁶⁶ when the Prayer over the Catechumens began to disappear from the liturgical manuscripts of the Divine Office.¹⁶⁷ Since the tenth-century *typikon* still provides a catechesis for the catechumens before Easter baptism,¹⁶⁸ M. Arranz proposed that at that time the Great Church was probably baptizing Orthodox progeny when they had attained the age of reason.¹⁶⁹ *De ceremoniis* I, 21 (12), would seem to recommend this interpretation. On Wednesday after Easter the emperor receives in the palace six of the newly baptized accompanied by six orphans,¹⁷⁰ and it is hard to imagine why the orphans would be escorting adult neophytes. But I suspect this is an instance when the ceremonial books are anachronistic. For Byzantine sources from the sixth to tenth centuries show that baptism on the fortieth day after birth had long been normal,¹⁷¹ though previously children were baptized at age three.¹⁷² So when the Praxapostolos manuscript Dresden A 104 at the beginning of the twelfth century has the deacons and godparents “take the children from their mothers” (берут детей от их матерей),¹⁷³ we can probably infer that they were still infants in their mothers’ arms.

At any rate, these Orthodox children (along, doubtless, with some adult converts from the various categories that continue to be mentioned in the liturgical manuscripts, such

¹⁶⁴ PG 4:141C. This text is not among those whose authenticity has been challenged: see H. U. von Balthasar, “Das Problem der Dionysius-Scholien,” in idem, *Kosmische Liturgie: Das Weltbild Maximus’ des Bekenners*, 2nd ed. (Einsiedeln, 1961), 644–72.

¹⁶⁵ Mathews, *Early Churches*, 128–29.

¹⁶⁶ Mateos, *Typicon*, II, 31–33 n. 2, 38–39, 78–79 and n. 6, cf. index, 300; Arranz, “Sacments I,” esp. 1–8; idem, “Évolution des rites d’incorporation et de réadmission dans l’Église,” 37–53.

¹⁶⁷ G. Hanke, “Das Kathedraloffizium der Hagia Sophia im Kontext der Liturgiegeschichte Konstantinopels” (doctoral diss. in preparation under my direction), chap. 5. Note, however, that the Litany, Prayer, and Dismissal of the Catechumens have remained to this day in the Byzantine eucharist: F. E. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western* (Oxford, 1896), 374–75, 400.

¹⁶⁸ Mateos, *Typicon*, II, 31–33 n. 2, 38–39, 78–79 and n. 6, cf. index, 300; Dresden A 104, in Dmitrievskij, *Типиконы*, 154–56; cf. Arranz, “Sacments I,” 4–5:43–49, 64, 377–97.

¹⁶⁹ Arranz, “Sacments I,” 2:44–47, 89–90; cf. Almazov, *История*, chap. 24, esp. 592–96.

¹⁷⁰ Vogt I, 82.

¹⁷¹ Vita of Abbess St. Elizabeth of Constantinople (before 591): F. Halkin, “Sainte Élisabeth d’Héraclée, abbesse à Constantinople,” AB 91 (1973), 255–56 (= BHG 2121); and *RegPatr* 592 (886–893 A.D.) and 972.1 (1094 A.D.); J. Baun, “The Fate of Babies Dying before Baptism in Byzantium,” *Studies in Church History* 31 (1994), 115–25. I owe these references to Stefano Parenti and Alice-Mary Talbot.

¹⁷² *RegPatr* 3:972.1.

¹⁷³ Dmitrievskij, *Типиконы*, 156; cf. Arranz, “Sacments I,” 5:375.

as pagans, Jews, Arians, Macedonians, Manicheans, Nabatians, Armenians, etc.)¹⁷⁴ continued to be processed toward baptism via a drastically reduced “catechumenate,” the details of which are not our concern here.¹⁷⁵ These “infant-catechumens” doubtless attended church services in the galleries *with their mothers*, and this might possibly be the source of the gynaeceum-equals-catechumena conflation.

Mathews objects that to put the women in the galleries would impede their access to the sacrament. But if the imperial party had communion brought up the stairs to them in the galleries (see above, A.III.9.a, g), the women communicants could certainly have been served the sacrament at similar antimensia set up for that purpose, as Strube suggests.¹⁷⁶ Besides, frequent communion had declined so drastically by the end of the fourth century that the problem Mathews raises would have been acute only at Easter and a few other major feasts.¹⁷⁷

At any rate, the overwhelming evidence for the presence of women and others like the sovereigns and their retainers in the galleries during the Divine Liturgy throughout this period when the galleries were called “catechumena,” and for the fact that the galleries were used for a bewildering variety of activities, both legitimate and less so, precludes from the outset any notion that the upper-level tribunes were reserved for the exclusive use of either catechumens or women.

By the time of Patriarch Athanasius I (ca. 1309), the placement of women in the galleries seems to have been the remnant of an already deteriorating practice: noble-women attended liturgy from the galleries, but Athanasius says they should be elsewhere, which clearly means they could have been elsewhere, and that elsewhere can only have been on the ground floor.

2. *Gallery Curtains*

One final point. Two sources from the tenth and fourteenth centuries respectively, Symeon Metaphrastes’ *vita* of Chrysostom (above, A.III.10 § 4) and Ignatius of Smolensk (A.III.12 § 5), refer to curtains or drapes hiding the women in the galleries. Though I have no reason to challenge these witnesses, the practice cannot have been in continuous use, since numerous other texts, early and late, refer to the women in the galleries being

¹⁷⁴P. Eleuteri and A. Rigo, *Eretici, dissidenti, musulmani ed ebrei a Bizanzio: Una raccolta eresiologica del XII secolo*, Ricerche (Venice, 1993), all post-Iconoclast liturgical texts (*ibid.*, 36) concerning these categories (I am indebted to Stefano Parenti for this reference); Arranz, “Sacraments I,” 3:48–84.

¹⁷⁵Details in the manuscripts examined by Arranz, “Sacraments I,” esp. 2, 4.

¹⁷⁶Strube, *Die westliche Eingangsseite*, 91–92. She proposes (p. 91) that the “Fußbodenmosaik der Westempore” may have been the place of the women’s communion. I presume she is referring to the rectangle in the pavement of the center of the west gallery directly opposite the sanctuary (Van Nice, *St. Sophia*, pls. 2, 17; Mainstone, *H. Sophia*, fig. 73), since I know of no floor mosaic in the west gallery: see C. Mango, *The Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul*, DOS 8 (Washington, D.C., 1962), 40–46 and diagram II. I have found no Byzantine evidence for the Slavic usage that I. Muretov, *Митрополит Киприан в его литургической деятельности* (Moscow, 1882), 142, cites from the Bulgarian Cyprian Tsamblak, metropolitan of Kiev (1381–82, 1390–1406), according to which the women, considered unworthy to communicate before the central Holy Doors of the iconostasis in view of the altar like the men did, received communion after the men, before the north door to the prothesis; cf. N. Teteriatnikov, “The Place of the Nun Melania (the Lady of the Mongols) in the Deesis Program of the Inner Narthex of Chora, Constantinople,” *CahArch* 43 (1995), 177–78 and n. 69. Muretov (p. 143) says we do not know how widespread this usage was in Rus’.

¹⁷⁷I treat this in R. F. Taft, *A History of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, V: *The Communion and Final Rites* (forthcoming in OCA), “Excursus to Chapter XII: The Frequency of Communion in Byzantium.”

spotted from below. And Patriarch Athanasius I (ca. 1309) accuses the noblewomen of going to the galleries to show off their finery (A.III.13 § 4), surely a pointless vanity if they were hidden behind curtains, unseen.

3. Segregation?

Though two sources clearly affirm the complete separation of the sexes in church by relegating all women to the galleries (A.III.12, 14), only the first of them, Ignatius of Smolensk (1392 A.D.), is a witness to the rite of Constantinople. Many other sources affirm the presence of a gynaecum space in the ground-floor side aisles, and the concern expressed again and again in patristic homilies over the interaction of men and women in church (below, D.II) makes it unlikely that originally, at least, the sexes were so separated that they could not get at each other if they wanted to.

B. SPECIAL WOMEN, SPECIAL SPACES

In addition to the ordinary laywomen, there was the order of deaconesses, with a special role and place in the Byzantine church.

I. The Ordination of Deaconesses

The third-century institution of a female diaconal ministry is beyond the scope of this paper.¹⁷⁸ The single issue of interest to us is the place these ordained women occupied in the Byzantine church building.¹⁷⁹

1. The Cheirotonia Rite

In the earliest extant rite for the cheirotonia of deaconesses in Byzantium,¹⁸⁰ the detailed rubrics of the mid-eighth-century euchology codex Barberini Gr. 336 show an almost exact parallelism between the rite for instituting deacons and deaconesses.¹⁸¹ Both were ordained in the bema, that is, within the sanctuary, inside the templon or chancel barrier, an area of the church from which the laity—and *a fortiori* all laywomen—except the emperor were normally barred.¹⁸² This is especially significant in the light of Byzantine liturgical symbolism, in which the altar symbolizes the divine presence. Only major orders (diaconate, presbyterate, episcopacy) are conferred at the altar within the bema, and the ritual “approach to the divine altar”—ἢ . . . ἐπὶ τὸν θεῖον θυσιαστῆριον προσα-

¹⁷⁸They appear for the first time as an order distinct from widows and virgins in the 3rd-century *Didaskalia*, II, 26.3–8, with a fixed (III, 12–13), if limited (III, 6.1–2; 9), ministry; cf. also II, 4.2; III, 4.1–2; III, 5, etc., in Funk, *Didascalia*, I, 34–36, 102–4, 186, 188–90, 198–200, 208–16.

¹⁷⁹The bibliography on deaconesses is considerable. The best recent overview, with the more important earlier bibliography indicated, is A.-A. Thiermeyer, “Der Diakonat der Frau,” *ThQ* 173 (1993), 226–36. To the literature cited there, add S. Elm, “Vergini, vedove, diaconesse: Alcuni osservazioni sullo sviluppo dei cosiddetti ‘ordini femminili’ nel quarto secolo in Oriente,” *Codex Aquilarensis* 5 (1991), 77–90.

¹⁸⁰On the ordination rite, see C. Vagaggini, “L’ordinazione delle diaconesse nella tradizione greca e bizantina,” *OCP* 40 (1974), 177, 179, 181; E. D. Theodorou, “Ἡ ἔχειροτονία” ἢ ‘χειροθεσία’ τῶν Διακονισσῶν,” *Θεολογία* 25 (1954), 576–601; *ibid.*, 26 (1955), 57–76.

¹⁸¹Parenti and Velkovska, *Barberini gr. 336*, §§ 161–64.

¹⁸²*The Rudder (Pedalion)*, 372–73, 560. Nuns, however, could enter (presumably in their monastic church) to clean the sanctuary or light the candles: *ibid.*, 372.

γωγή, Pseudo-Dionysius calls it¹⁸³—in which the candidate for major orders is conducted from the nave through the chancel doors to the altar, signifies approaching the font of the “divine grace” of ordination for which the bishop prays.

Vita 14 of the ninth-century St. Athanasia of Aegina describes a scene apparently modeled on this ritual. At the convent eucharist on the fortieth-day memorial of the saint’s death, her fellow nuns saw the following vision:

When it was morning and the divine liturgy had begun, two of the leaders of that sacred group of nuns . . . observed two men, awe-inspiring in appearance and with flashing bright robes; and they had the blessed Athanasia between them. And leading her and making her stand in front of the holy sanctuary, they brought out a purple robe decorated with gems and pearls. They dressed her like an empress and crowned her head with a crown that had crosses in the front and back. They placed in her hand a jewel-studded staff and escorted her into the divine sanctuary (*εἰς τὸ θεῖον ταύτην θυσιαστήριον ἥγαγον*).¹⁸⁴

Though the angelic visitors invest Athanasia with imperial insignia, imperial rank did not grant women entry into the earthly sanctuary (see below, B.III.1). Rather, it seems Athanasia was a deaconess,¹⁸⁵ and the scenario imitates the ritual approach to the altar of the Byzantine diaconal ordination rites.

2. *The Communion Ritual*

The diaconal prayers and rubrics assign male candidates a more intimate eucharistic ministry, however, referring to the deacons as “ministers at your immaculate mysteries” and having them distribute the chalice at communion. The deaconess, though she receives the chalice in the hand and drinks from it, puts it back on the altar without distributing it to others.

3. *Balsamon (ca. 1130/40–d. after 1195)*

By the twelfth century, however, women ascetics were called “deaconesses” abusively (*καταχρηστικῶς*),¹⁸⁶ according to Balsamon, who strongly opposed the ordination of women to any grade. The order of deaconess no longer exists, he tells us, and women are barred from the sanctuary. The reasoning in his commentary on canon 15 of Chalcedon (451 A.D.), which ruled that women not be ordained deaconess before the age of forty, is pure *petitio principii*:

ὅτι κανών ἐστι διοριζόμενος μὴ εἰσέρχεσθαι γυναικας ἐν τῷ ἀγίῳ βῆματι. Ἡ γοῦν μὴ δυναμένη ἐν τῷ ἀγίῳ θυσιαστηρίῳ εἰσελθεῖν, πῶς τὰ τῶν διακόνων ἐνεργήσει;¹⁸⁷

For there is a canon ruling that women cannot enter the holy bema. How can one unable to enter the holy sanctuary exercise the ministry of the deacons?

¹⁸³ *De eccles. hierarchia* VII, 3.2, PG 3:509D; full discussion of this key liturgical concept in Taft, *Great Entrance*, 279–83 (and see index under “accessus ad altare”).

¹⁸⁴ *Vita* 14, ed. F. Halkin, “La vie de sainte Athanase d’Egine” (= BHG 180), in idem, *Six inédits d’hagiologie byzantine*, SubsHag 74 (Brussels, 1987), 191; “Life of St. Athanasia of Aegina,” trans. L. F. Sherry, in Talbot, *Holy Women*, 153. The *vita* is found in a single manuscript dated 916 (ibid., 138–39).

¹⁸⁵ *Vita* 18, in Talbot, *Holy Women*, 156 and n. 75.

¹⁸⁶ PG 137:441D.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

II. The Narthex and Gynaeceum of the Deaconesses

By the tenth century, in the Great Church we find a special place set aside for the order of deaconesses, which at that time had not yet degenerated into a purely titular grade awarded nuns, but was an order of pious women directly dependent on the bishop and attached to Hagia Sophia.¹⁸⁸

1. De ceremoniis

The tenth-century *De ceremoniis* I, 44 (35), describes the imperial ceremonial for Holy Saturday and Annunciation.¹⁸⁹ At the third hour the emperor begins his progress toward Hagia Sophia. Going first to the Holy Well located near or in the porch south of the apse at the east end of the church,¹⁹⁰ he enters and is greeted by the patriarch. Then both enter the basilica, doubtless by the door leading into the south aisle at the east end of the church, and go into the sanctuary via the central or Holy Doors of the chancel. After incensing the sanctuary, the emperor and the patriarch go off to the skeuophylakion, where they continue their devotions. The account continues:

1. καὶ εἶθ' οὕτως ἀνίσταται ὁ βασιλεύς, καὶ ἔξελθὼν ἀπὸ τοῦ σκευοφυλακίου, διέρχεται διὰ τοῦ γυναικίτου νάρθηκος, ἐν ᾧ καὶ τὴν συνήθη στάσιν κέκτηνται αἱ τῆς αὐτῆς Μεγάλης Ἐκκλησίας διακόνισσαι, 2. καὶ ἔξέρχεται διὰ τῆς ἀριστερᾶς πύλης τοῦ βῆματος καὶ ἐπιδίδωσιν αὐτῷ ὁ πατριάρχης εὐλογίας. 3. Καὶ διελθόντες ἀμφότεροι διὰ τοῦ ὄπισθεν τοῦ βῆματος στενοῦ διαβατικοῦ τοῦ Ἀγίου Νικολάου, ἀπέρχονται μέχρι τοῦ Ἀγίου Φρέατος.¹⁹¹

1. Then the emperor rises, and going out of the skeuophylakion, he passes through the narthex of the gynaeceum where the deaconesses of the Great Church have their customary place, 2. and goes out by the left door of the sanctuary and the patriarch gives him the eulogia. 3. And going via the narrow passageway of St. Nicholas located behind the sanctuary, both of them go off to the Holy Well.

In attempting to divine where the Narthex and Gynaeceum of the Deaconesses were located, and how the to and fro described took place, recall (see above, A.II.3) that the sanctuary of Hagia Sophia was separated from the nave by a Π-shaped, three-sided templon or chancel barrier jutting into the nave with doors on all three sides: in front (west), the central or “Holy Doors,” and side doors right (south) and left (north) as one faces the altar. According to the *De ceremoniis* account:

1. The emperor reenters the sanctuary (1), and again leaves it (2) via its north side, that is, the left side as one faces east.
2. Since the text has him use the left chancel door only when leaving the sanctuary for good (2), it is possible that in going to and from the skeuophylakion (1) he used the passage between the northeasternmost pier and the east wall of the church, just in front of the apse, which leads from the sanctuary to the eastern extremity of the north aisle.¹⁹² Otherwise he would have exited the

¹⁸⁸ G. Dagron, “Les moines de la ville: Le monachisme à Constantinople jusqu’au Concile de Chalcédoine (451),” *TM* 4 (1970), 265 n. 169.

¹⁸⁹ For Annunciation, see Vogt I, 172.

¹⁹⁰ Mango, *Brazen House*, 60–72; Mainstone, *H. Sophia*, 113.

¹⁹¹ Vogt I, 170–71.

¹⁹² Van Nice, *St. Sophia*, pl. 11.

north door of the bema and passed between the columns of the northeast exedra to the easternmost bay of the north aisle.

3. How did the patriarch and imperial party exit the northeast bay and enter the skeuophylakion? It is possible, though not certain, that they passed via the now bricked-in small door in the center of the easternmost bay of the north aisle a scant 4.7 meters across from the south side of the skeuophylakion.¹⁹³
4. They could have returned the same way or by a different route. One could perhaps infer the latter from the fact that only on his return, according to the text, does the emperor pass through the Narthex of the Gynaecium of the Deaconesses (1). If by a different route, there are two options: via the central door of the north aisle or via the door at the east end of the same aisle.
5. At any rate, on its return the procession passed through the Narthex of the Deaconesses, and that can only have been located outside one of the three church doors within easy range of the skeuophylakion, that is, (1) in the relatively narrow (5 m wide) strip between the skeuophylakion and the small door directly across from it in the north wall of the church;¹⁹⁴ (2) in front of the main doors in the center of the north aisle; or (3) in the forehalls outside the door at the east end of the north aisle. I return to this point in the following sections (B.II.2–4).

2. *Anthony of Novgorod (1200 A.D.)*

The *De ceremoniis* account is corroborated by the Russian pilgrim Anthony of Novgorod, who visited Hagia Sophia in 1200 and describes his tour of the relics kept there:¹⁹⁵

1. First of all we venerated Saint Sophia . . . and the icon of the most holy Theotokos holding Christ, which a Jew had stabbed on the throat with a knife and blood flowed out.
2. And the blood of the Lord that issued from the icon we kissed in the prothesis (во олтари маломъ) . . . [here a series of relics and other objects in the prothesis—i.e., skeuophylakion—are listed].
3. And at the outside of the door of the prothesis (въ hei двери ольяря малаго) stands the cross the same size that Christ on earth in the flesh was in height.¹⁹⁶ 4. And

¹⁹³Ibid., pls. 1, 11; Antoniades, "Εκφραστις," II, 146–53; F. Dirimtekin, "Le skevophylakion de Sainte-Sophie," *REB* 19 (1961), 393.

¹⁹⁴The present difference in floor level between the basilica and the skeuophylakion, as well as the present outside entrance to the skeuophylakion at the actual ground level, well above the rotunda's original ground-floor level, can be discounted. The door dates from Turkish times (Mainstone, *H. Sophia*, 137, 138, pl. 161), and neither it nor the present ground level has anything to do with the original Byzantine building and its use, as has been shown by the latest excavations reported in S. Türkoglu, "Ayasofya Skevophilakionu kazisi," *Ayasofya Müzesi Yıllığı—Annual of Ayasofya Museum* 9 (1983), 25–35, plans 1–3 and pls. 1–9, at the end of the volume. Cf. also Van Nice, *St. Sophia*, pl. 4; Mainstone, *H. Sophia*, 129, 133–38, pl. 161; 277, plan A8; Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 219, cf. 182–83. I review the whole question of the skeuophylakion and access to it in "Quaestiones disputatae: The Skeuophylakion of Hagia Sophia and the Entrances of the Liturgy Revisited," part 1, *OC* 81 (1997), 1–35.

¹⁹⁵Text in Loparev, 2–9.

¹⁹⁶How many doors does the skeuophylakion have in Anthony's account? His reference to "въ hei двери ольяря малаго" (3) has been taken to mean there must have been two doors, an outside one and an inside one. But there is no mention of a second, "inside door," and since *двери* could be genitive as well as prepositional, the text could be interpreted to mean either "at the outside door of the prothesis" or "at the outside

behind that cross is buried Anna, who gave her house to St. Sophia (and on which [property] the prothesis is built) and for that reason she was buried there.¹⁹⁷

5. And not far from this prothesis the Myrrhbearers sing, and there stands before them a great icon of the most pure Theotokos holding Christ . . .

6. And from there, on the same side, is the Church of the Holy Apostle Peter (И оттолѣ на той жъ странѣ церкви [variant: церковь] есть святаго апостола Петра), where St. Theophanides is buried, the one who kept the key of Hagia Sophia; and they kiss these very keys . . .

7. Near to the Myrrhbearers in St. Sophia is the small tomb of the child of St. Athinogenos. And there are no other tombs in St. Sophia save that one.

8. And from there, going toward the doors, is the column of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus.¹⁹⁸

It is not difficult to trace the pilgrim's route through the basilica:

1. Approaching the Great Church complex from the southeast, by the Holy Well where the icon of Christ stabbed by the Jew was located (1),¹⁹⁹ Anthony crosses over to enter the skeuophylakion situated just off the northeast side of the church and venerates the relics kept there (2). Anthony does not say how he arrived at or entered the skeuophylakion, though he refers to its door (3). But it is clear that the "prothesis" is a separate building, since Anna is buried there (4), and Anthony tells us explicitly that the only tomb inside Hagia Sophia is that of the child-saint Athinogenos (7). We can safely assume, then, that Anthony's "prothesis" was the extant rotunda traditionally identified as the skeuophylakion.

of the door of the prothesis." At any rate, the point the text is trying to make is clear: the Christ-size cross is located on the outside wall of the rotunda by the one door of the prothesis rather than inside it. So the text is no proof of a second door. An earlier Latin text, the "Anonymus Mercati," provides independent confirmation of Anthony's account: K. N. Ciggaar, "Une description de Constantinople traduite par un pèlerin anglois," *REB* 34 (1976), 211–67. The Greek original, dating 1063–81, was translated into Latin ca. 1089–96 by a western, most likely English, pilgrim (*ibid.*, 214–15, 219, 221, 225–32). The text describes the skeuophylakion door with its cross the height of Christ, as well as the stones from the Holy Sepulcher that Anthony mentions:

Et fecit de longitudine Christi Iustinianus imperator crucem et ornavit eam argento et aureo et lapidibus preciosis et deauravit eam. Et statuit eam iuxta ostium gazophylacii ubi sunt omnia sacra vasa et thesaurus magnae ecclesiae similiter et omnia predicta sanctuaria. In dextera autem parte altaris templi extra in pariete est hostium monumenti Domini . . . (*ibid.*, 246–47, lines 14–20).

A bit later the same text also recounts the story of the Jew stabbing the throat of Christ in the image Anthony locates at the southeast extremity of the church (*ibid.*, 248–49, lines 82–102). It says nothing, however, of a second door into the treasury.

¹⁹⁷That a widow Anna owned the property is confirmed by Preger, *Scriptores*, 78; cf. Mathews, *Early Churches*, 160.

¹⁹⁸See above, A.III.8.

¹⁹⁹Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 136–39 and n. 31, 304; Mainstone, *H. Sophia*, 271, plan A2.

And the emperor Justinian made a cross the height of Christ, and decorated it with silver and gold and precious stones, and gilded it. And he placed it beside the door of the *gazophylakion* where all the sacred vessels and treasure of the Great Church are, and all the above mentioned relics. And on the right side of the altar of the church, outside in the wall, is the door of the Lord's sepulcher.

2. Near the skeuophylakion, Anthony continues, is the place where the myrrhbearing women sing (5). From his initial description (5–6) this would seem to be located outside the church, somewhere between the skeuophylakion and the church of St. Peter which Anthony passes next, on the north side of Hagia Sophia (6).²⁰⁰ But then he tells us the Myrrhbearers are near the tomb of St. Athinogenos, which was inside the church (7). The seeming confusion probably results from the fact that Hagia Sophia had both a narthex (outside) and a gynaeceum (inside) of the deaconesses. I shall return to this below (B.II.3–4). Anthony tells us there is a large icon of the Theotokos with child in front of the Myrrhbearers (6), and the later Russian post-Crusader anonymous pilgrim account places what may be the same Marian image under a ciborium in the eastern half of the north aisle.²⁰¹
3. Since Anthony had to be outside the basilica to visit the skeuophylakion and St. Peter's, he probably reentered the basilica via the doors in the center of the north aisle. At any rate, we next see him inside the church, progressing westward down the north aisle past the “column of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus” at the northwest end of the aisle (see above, A.III.8).

3. The Gynaeceum of the Deaconesses

Are the Narthex and/or Gynaeceum of the Deaconesses to be identified with Anthony's place where “the Myrrhbearers sing” (5)? Presuming that Anthony's Myrrhbearers are the deaconesses, they doubtless assisted at the liturgy in a section of the gynaeceum reserved for them. As members of the clergy, they were certainly not constrained to attend services in some narthex. This would be not only incongruous with the deaconesses' rank, but also pointless: what could possibly be the purpose of having the women singing

²⁰⁰On St. Peter's church, which has disappeared without a trace, see Janin, *Églises*, 398–99; Mateos, *Typicon*, I, 104, 128, 194, 198, 232, 272, 278, 310, 322, 378; II, 104; Dmitrievskij, *Типиконы*, 161–62, 327 n. 2; Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 210, 216, 223. In Taft, “*Quaestiones disputatae*,” part 1, sec. A.I.6, I review the evidence for St. Peter's, concluding that it was a separate church, somewhere in the clutter of structures within the Great Church complex occupying the slope between H. Sophia and H. Eirene (cf. F. Dirimtekin, “Les fouilles faites en 1946–1947 et en 1958–1960 entre Sainte-Sophie et Sainte-Irène, à Istanbul,” *CahArch* 13 [1962], 161–85; Mathews, *Early Churches*, 83 and fig. 43), and not a small rectangular chapel built into the north wall of the basilica just west of the skeuophylakion rotunda, as in Antoniades, *Ἐκφραστις*, II, 161–63, and I, pl. 17 between pp. 48 and 49. This is confirmed by Anthony, who informs us that St. Theophanides was buried in St. Peter's (6), and that the only tomb in H. Sophia was that of St. Athinogenos (7). It is true that one text of the *typikon* of the Great Church (Mateos, *Typicon*, I, 198) refers to St. Peter's “inside the Great Church” (ἐνδον τῆς Μεγάλης Ἐκκλησίας). But St. Peter's was too near H. Eirene, the latter lying 10 m higher than and 110 m to the north of H. Sophia (Janin, *Constantinople*, map 1: Carte archéologique et topographique; Mathews, *Early Churches*, 78), to be a part of H. Sophia: Dresden A 104 (Dmitrievskij, *Типиконы*, 138) says one could descend from St. Peter's via a spiral staircase and enter H. Eirene (διὰ τοῦ κοχλίου τῷ ἀγίου Πέτρου κατερχόμενος, ἀνέρχεται ἐν τῇ ἀγίᾳ Εἰρήνῃ). The Easter baptism rubrics of the early-12th-century patriarchal “Bessarion Euchology,” Grottaferrata Γβ I, confirm Anthony's location of St. Peter's on the north side of H. Sophia, beyond the skeuophylakion: M. Arranz, *L'Eucologio costantinopolitano agli inizi del secolo XI: Hagiasmatarion e Archieratikon (Rituale e Pontificale) con l'aggiunta del Leiturgikon (Messale)* (Rome, 1996), 182; idem, “Sacraments I,” 6:74–75; Goar, *Εὐχολόγιον*, 291bis; cf. Mateos, *Typicon*, II, 84–85; G. Majeska, “Notes on the Skeuophylakion of St. Sophia,” *VizVrem* 55 (1998), 212–15; Taft, *Great Entrance*, 199 n. 68.

²⁰¹Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 132–33, 215–16. Majeska locates Anthony's icon outside the basilica, near St. Peter's, but I see no need to interpret Anthony's text in that way.

outside the church?²⁰² So I would infer that Anthony's place where "the Myrrhbearers sing" is identical with the "gynaeceum where the deaconesses have their customary place" in *De ceremoniis* I, 44 (35).

Second, it is clear in *De ceremoniis* I, 44 (35), that the deaconesses' narthex and gynaeceum are two different but contiguous locales, one presumably outside, the other inside Hagia Sophia's north aisle. Since *De ceremoniis* I, 1 (10), identifies this same left (north) ground-floor aisle of Holy Apostles and Chalkoprateia (above, A.III.9.b–c) as the gynaeceum, one may conclude that the north aisle was also considered gynaeceum space in Hagia Sophia, and that the Gynaeceum of the Deaconesses most likely occupied the eastern half or at least the easternmost bay of the north aisle, opposite the imperial metatorion on the other side of the church in the corresponding east bay of the south aisle.²⁰³ Since Justinian limited to forty the deaconesses ministering (though probably not all together in the same shift) at Hagia Sophia and the three other patriarchal churches served by the clergy of the Great Church (Hagia Eirene, Chalkoprateia, and Hagios Theodoros of Sphorakios),²⁰⁴ the space reserved for their use must have been large enough to hold a fair number of people.

4. *The Narthex of the Deaconesses*

Since it is logical to suppose that this Gynaeceum of the Deaconesses was just inside the church from the Narthex of the Deaconesses, the latter must have been a forehall or chamber located outside the main body of the church: *De ceremoniis* I, 44 (35), calls it a "narthex" (above, B.II.1 § 1); Anthony, a притворъ or "porch." Just where this "porch" or "narthex" was located is not certain, but we may safely infer it was located at the entrance to the Gynaeceum of the Deaconesses, that is, somewhere just outside the eastern half of the north aisle of the basilica. Though Anthony's description could be taken as implying it was either between the skeuophylakion and the door right across from it in the middle of the southeast bay of Hagia Sophia, or just outside the north-central doors (see above, B.II.2 §§ 5–7 and commentary), F. Dirimtekin would locate it in the outbuildings that once surrounded the northeast entrance of the church just north of the apse, proposing, on the basis of his excavations there, one of the forehalls one had to pass through to go from outside into the northeast bay of the church via the northeastern door.²⁰⁵ The available evidence does not permit a definitive resolution of this issue.

Perhaps we may draw a parallel from a text not long before Anthony of Novgorod's visit to the capital in 1200. Byzantine canonist Theodore Balsamon (ca. 1130/40–d. after 1195), commenting (above, A.III.11) that women in menstruation are allowed to pray but should not enter the church proper (*εἰς τὰὸν θεοῦ εἰσιέναι . . . οὐ δεῖ*), testifies that

²⁰²Indeed, since Sozomen, *Hist. eccles.* VII, 16.11–15 (GCS 50:324), informs us that women in the ministry should be at least sixty years old, one might ask what was the point of having them singing at all. On the question of women's choirs in Christian worship in late antiquity, see J. Quasten, *Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, National Pastoral Musicians Studies in Church Music and Liturgy (Washington, D.C., 1983), 75–87. N. K. Moran, *Singers in Late Byzantine and Slavonic Painting*, *Byzantina Neerlandica*, fasc. 9 (Leiden, 1986), does not discuss the choir of deaconesses or the singing of women in church in Byzantium (indeed, there is no entry for either "deaconess" or "women" in the index).

²⁰³See note 30 above.

²⁰⁴See CIC, *Nov* 2021; cf. Taft, *Great Entrance*, 200–201 n. 71.

²⁰⁵Dirimtekin, "Skeuophylakion," 396–98 and plan 3. Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 228, conflates both spaces and locates them in the northeast exedra.

in the twelfth century, at least, some Byzantine churches had a πρόβαος distinct from the gynaecia and nave, and destined for use by the women not prevented by menstruation from attending church. Balsamon's description would fit in perfectly with the idea of a vestibule by one of the doors at the northeast end of the church near the skeuophylakion, a vestibule through which the Great Entrance procession would also have passed (A.III.11 § 6).

III. Imperial Women in the Sanctuary?

1. Augusta Pulcheria (399–453)

Pulcheria (399–453), sister of Emperor Theodosius II (408–450) and augusta from July 4, 414,²⁰⁶ seems to have had pretensions beyond the merely imperial. She compared herself to Mary and considered herself the bride of Christ.²⁰⁷ On that basis, and not because of her dignity as augusta, she inveigled Patriarch Sisinnius I (426–427) to let her communicate at Easter within the sanctuary. But when she tried the same again the next Easter, on April 15, 428, Sisinnius' successor Nestorius (428–431) stopped her in her tracks.²⁰⁸ The *Letter to Cosmas* 8, written in Greek after 435 A.D. and preserved in Syriac translation, recounts the incident:

Furthermore, on the great feast of the Pasch it was customary for the emperor to receive communion within the Holy of Holies. Pulcheria wanted (to do the same). She had convinced the bishop Sisinnius and received communion with the emperor within the Holy of Holies. Nestorius did not allow that, but when she approached the Holy of Holies as was her custom, Nestorius saw her and asked what that meant. The archdeacon Peter explained the situation to him. Nestorius hastened to meet her at the door to the Holy of Holies and stopped her and did not permit her to enter.

Queen Pulcheria was irritated with him and said to him, "Let me enter according to my custom." But he said, "This place should not be trodden on except by the priests." She said to him, "Why? Have I not given birth to God?" He said to her, "You? You have given birth to Satan!" And he chased her away from the door to the Holy of Holies.²⁰⁹

Since Pulcheria tried to justify her entrance into the sanctuary not as augusta but as imitator of Mary Theotokos²¹⁰—hardly a recommendation for Nestorius—the Byzantines apparently thought that Mary, at least, had a right to be within the sanctuary.

²⁰⁶ See K. G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 3 (Berkeley, 1982), 79–111, 147–228; T. E. Gregory and A. Cutler, "Pulcheria," *ODB* III:1757–58; V. Limberis, *Divine Heiress: The Virgin Mary and the Creation of Christian Constantinople* (London–New York, 1994), 54–55 (I owe this reference to F. van de Paverd).

²⁰⁷ See F. Nau, ed., *L'Histoire de Barhadbešabbha 'Arbaia* 27, PO 9:565–68; Nestorius, *The Bazaar of Heracleides*, trans. G. K. Drower and L. Hodgson (Oxford, 1925), 96–97; cf. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses*, 141–45, 153–54; Limberis, *Divine Heiress*, 54–55.

²⁰⁸ On the date, see *ODB* III:1757.

²⁰⁹ F. Nau, ed., *Histoire de Nestorius d'après la lettre à Cosme*, PO 13:279.

²¹⁰ To depict Mary in the sanctuary apse seated on the throne, where only the bishop can sit, is a commonplace in Byzantine iconography: see examples in I. Kalavrezou, "Images of the Mother: When the Virgin Mary Became Meter Theou," *DOP* 44 (1990), 168 and figs. 5, 8–9. Similarly, Mary is depicted in the sanctuary in visions: Wortley, *Récits*, 14/XVI.3, pp. 112–13; Rydén, *Life of St. Andrew the Fool*, II, lines 3732–58.

2. The Empress' Communion

One later text seems to imply that not only the deaconesses but also the empress received communion inside the sanctuary. The Russian pilgrim Ignatius of Smolensk was present at the coronation of Emperor Manuel II Paleologus (1391–1425), which he says took place on February 11, 1392.²¹¹ Here is his eyewitness description of the imperial communion:

1. When the time for holy communion had arrived, the two chief deacons went and bowed to the empress. When she had descended from her throne, the people standing there tore apart all the drapes on the chamber, each wanting as large a piece as possible for himself. 2. The empress entered a wing of the sanctuary (крило олтаря) by the south doors, and was given holy communion there. 3. The emperor, however, received communion from the patriarch at the altar of Christ together with the priests.²¹²

This text contains some surprises:

1. It seems to say the empress actually entered the sanctuary to receive communion (2). This is highly unusual in the light of the traditional prohibition against women and, indeed, any layperson but the emperor, entering the altar enclosure, a *taxis* already well entrenched by the end of the fourth century (see above, A.III.1, and below, D.I). Furthermore, Byzantine canon law codifies the emperor's privilege but makes no such provision for the empress.²¹³ So Majeska may be right that the empress did not actually enter the enclosure but communicated at the south door of the Π-shaped chancel barrier.²¹⁴
2. On the other hand, even among the Byzantines there were exceptions to this rule. Initially, at least, deaconesses, as we saw above (B.I), were considered part of the clergy and were ordained and communicated at the altar, inside the sanctuary, just like the male recipients of major orders.
3. At any rate, that the empress' dignity was not equivalent to the emperor's can be seen in the imperial communion ritual. Ignatius simply says that the empress "was given holy communion" (2), whereas the emperor receives communion from the patriarch at the altar like the priests do (3), that is, being given first the bread, then the chalice, separately and in his own hands. This communion of the emperor at the altar with the clergy is an innovation in the later Greek sources, which Majeska is correct in seeing confirmed by the same custom in the crowning of the Russian tsar.²¹⁵

²¹¹On the date, Ps.-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, ed. Verpeaux, 351–52; and esp. P. Schreiner, "Hochzeit und Krönung Kaiser Manuels II. im Jahre 1392," *BZ* 60 (1967), 70–85; and Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 416–20, who review thoroughly and competently the event itself, its sources, and the relevant literature and arguments. Schreiner (pp. 76–79) also edits the text.

²¹²Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 110–11.

²¹³The Rudder (*Pedalion*), 372–73.

²¹⁴Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 432. On the chancel barrier of H. Sophia, see A.I.3 above.

²¹⁵Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 433 n. 114. On the relationship between the Greek and Slavonic coronation rituals, see the remarks and literature cited in Arranz, "Les sacrements de l'institution de l'ancien Euchologe constantinopolitain," III: 1, *OCP* 56 (1990), 85–87; also B. A. Uspenskiĭ, "Литургический статус царя в русской церкви: приобщение святым тайнам (Историко-литургический этюд)," in press. I am grateful to Prof. Boris Uspenskiĭ for providing me a prepublication copy of his study.

IV. Women Saints in the Sanctuary?

St. Gregory Nazianzen (329/30–ca. 390), bishop of Constantinople from 379 to 381, describes in *Epitaphia* 88–89 how his dying mother, St. Nonna († ca. 373), grasped the altar (*ἱερὰ τράπεζα*) with one hand while raising the other in prayer; and his *Oratio 8 in laudem sororis suae Gorgoniae* 18 tells how his sister, St. Gorgonia († ca. 370), seriously ill and despairing of any earthly cure, rose from her sickbed at night and laid her head on the altar (*τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἔσυτῆς προθεῖσα*).^{215a} The term *θυσιαστήριον* can also commonly refer to the entire sanctuary area, but there is no ambiguity in the previous text: *ἱερὰ τράπεζα* can only mean the altar table.

Gregory is the only source in which I have found such a reference, and the context, which in both instances seems to suit a private domestic chapel, is not clear. Still, what Gregory narrates is certainly contrary to the general rule.

C. WHEN? RESTRICTIONS ON WOMEN'S ATTENDANCE AT CHURCH SERVICES

Byzantine canonical sources say very little about women except with regard to marriage, and marriage law is not gender-discriminatory: it concerns men as well as women.²¹⁶ Indeed, one searches in vain for any body of restrictive canonical legislation concerning where women can go in church—there is in fact remarkably little juridical evidence of spaces in church forbidden to women²¹⁷—and what they can or cannot do while there. The only restrictions on church attendance directed solely at women concern vigils and “ritual purity,” that is, menstruation.

I. Vigils

Chrysostom, still a presbyter in Antioch in 390 A.D., writing in his *De sacerdotio* III, 13.69, on the surveillance of virgins, says a virgin should be made to stay at home, should go out only rarely in the course of the year, and above all, “It is necessary to keep her away from funerals and night vigils (*δεῖ δὲ καὶ ἐκφορῶν καὶ παννυχίδων ἀπείργειν*). For he knows, the serpent of a thousand ruses knows how to spread his poison even in laudable occupations.”²¹⁸ Earlier, canon 35 of the Council of Elvira in Spain (305 A.D.) had prohibited women from vigils in the cemeteries because of the well-known abuses accompanying mourning rituals.²¹⁹

^{215a} PG 38:55A–56A=CPG 3038; PG 35:809C=CPG 3010. Both *Epitaphia* and *Oratio 8* are cited in F. J. Dölger, “Die Heiligkeit des Altars und ihre Begründung im christlichen Altertum,” *Antike und Christentum* 2 (1930), 169–70. I am grateful to my colleague Prof. Maria Giovanna Muzj for bringing this reference to my attention.

²¹⁶ See *The Rudder (Pedalion)*, “marriage” in the index, 1026.

²¹⁷ One case is St. Theodore of Sykeon’s retreat in the side chapel of St. Plato, a special case derived from the saint’s desire for monastic seclusion and privacy: *Vita* 60.8, ed. Festugière, I, 51; II, 54. And in 787, Nicaea II, canon 18, rules, understandably, that women should not reside in (men’s) monasteries or episcopal residences: Joannou, *Discipline*, II, 276–77.

²¹⁸ Jean Chrysostome, *Sur le sacerdoce (Dialogue et homélie)*, ed. A.-M. Malingrey, SC 272 (Paris, 1980), 217.

²¹⁹ Mansi 2:11: “Placuit prohiberi ne feminae in coemiterio pervigilent; eo quod saepe sub obtentu orationis latenter scelera committant.” On funeral vigils and the attendant abuses, see Chrysostom, *De Lazaro concio*, V, 13, PG 48:1022; Quasten, *Music and Worship*, 160ff; Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium*, 453–57; A. Karpozilos, A. Kazhdan, N. Teteriatnikov, and A. Cutler, “Funerals,” *ODB* II:808–9; M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in the Greek Tradition* (Cambridge, 1974), 24ff.

Later, in Constantinople from 398 until his definitive exile in 404, Chrysostom witnesses to the exclusion of women from attending vigils there too. Waxing eloquent on the consolations of nocturnal prayer in his *Homily 26 on Acts* 3–4, he tells us that on nights of public vigil the women, forbidden to go out to them, kept watch at home.²²⁰ Palladius' *Dialogue on the Life of John Chrysostom* V, 146–49, also reports that attendance at vigils in Chrysostom's time was restricted to men: Chrysostom told the wives to stay at home and pray.²²¹

This stricture, though not unknown elsewhere,²²² was not general.²²³ Even in Byzantium it seems to have been a metropolitan precaution, for in the provinces things seem to have been less strict than in the capital. In Cappadocia, Gregory of Nyssa (d. 394) describes the participation of women at the vigil for the wake of his sister St. Macrina in 379.²²⁴ And the *vita* of St. Matrona, from Perge in Pamphylia and later abbess in Constantinople at the end of the fifth century, says she frequented the vigils along with other pious women, despite the fact that her husband Dometian forbade it.²²⁵

Even in Constantinople the prohibition was probably not observed consistently. Twenty-five years after Chrysostom the ill-fated Patriarch Nestorius (428–431) again “prohibited and prevented women from assembling at night together with the men for prayer and singing the hymns and chants.”²²⁶ Barhadbešabbha ‘Arbaia, in his *History* 21, tells why: in Constantinople, virgins engaged in the service of the church were guilty of promiscuity at the vigils (Syriac ܠܻܻܻܻ), so Nestorius forbade them to attend—for which they and their companions in revelry almost stoned him!²²⁷ By the time of Iconoclasm the exclusion of women has clearly fallen into desuetude: ca. 807, Stephen the Deacon's *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, martyred in 765, tells how the latter used to attend night vigils with his mother (cited above, A.II.4). And St. Thomaïs of Lesbos, a married lay-woman of the first half of the tenth century who spent most of her life in Constantinople,²²⁸ is described in her *Vita* 10 as moving freely about the capital alone, day and night, visiting shrines and participating in processions:

²²⁰ PG 60:201–4. On Constantinopolitan vigils in general, see R. F. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville, Minn., 1993), 171–74.

²²¹ Palladios, *Dialogue sur la vie de Jean Chrysostome*, ed. A.-M. Malingrey, 2 vols., SC 341–42 (Paris, 1988), I, 124 = PG 47:20.

²²² Quasten, *Music and Worship*, 163ff.

²²³ For evidence of women at vigils, see Taft, *Hours*, 166–87.

²²⁴ *Life of St. Macrina* 33: “While we were busy with these [preparations of the body of Macrina], and the psalmody of the virgins mingled with lamentations filled the place, the news somehow had quickly spread throughout the whole surrounding area, and all the neighbors began to hurry there in such numbers that the vestibule could not hold them. At dawn (ὤρθρος) after the all-night vigil (πανύγχις) by her [bier], with hymnody as at martyrs' panegyrics, the crowd that had flocked in from the whole surrounding countryside, both men and women, interrupted the psalmody with their grieving.” Grégoire de Nysse, *Vie de Sainte Macrine*, ed. P. Maraval, SC 178 (Paris, 1971), 246–51; trans. from Taft, *Hours*, 168.

²²⁵ *Vita* 2–3, 8, AASS, Nov. 3:791, 794 (= BHG 1221); “Life of St. Matrona of Perge,” trans. J. Featherstone, in Talbot, *Holy Women*, 20–21, 27; I am indebted to Jeffrey Featherstone for bringing these references to my attention.

²²⁶ E. Goeller, ed., “Ein nestorianisches Bruchstück zur Kirchengeschichte des 4. und 5. Jahrhunderts,” OC 1 (1901), 94–95.

²²⁷ PO 9:528; cf. Limberis, *Divine Heiress*, 54. There is no basis for the parenthetical gloss on vigils—“(repas pour les défunts)” —in Nau's French translation (loc. cit.). Šahrā in Syriac simply means “vigil.”

²²⁸ “Life of St. Thomaïs of Lesbos,” trans. P. Halsall, in Talbot, *Holy Women*, 291–322; cf. 291–92 for the dates of the saint and of her *vita*.

<Thomaïs> constantly visited the divine churches and most frequently attended <services at churches> where all-night hymnody (*πάννυχος ὑμνῳδία*) to God was being performed. She used to go regularly to the most divine church at Blachernai, and would walk the whole way at night (*διηνεκῶς περιήρει νύκτωρ τὴν ὅλην ὁδόν*) sending forth hymns of supplication to God and entreating his all-pure Mother.²²⁹

Thomaïs, a middle-class woman not of the nobility, may have had more latitude because of her lower social status, Halsall remarks, “but her excursions into the streets and marketplaces may also reflect the security and stability of life in tenth-century Constantinople.”²³⁰

II. “Ritual Purity”

1. Menstruation

The second restriction concerns feminine hygiene and “ritual purity.” Only those totally innocent of sociocultural history could be surprised by this. In all premodern societies, questions of alimentation, digestion, elimination, reproduction, childbirth, infant mortality—in a word, life-death issues of hygiene, health, sanitation, and the survival of the species—were automatically religious concerns too. At a time when other social structures to regulate such issues were wanting, myth and ritual inevitably filled the gap. And since the stereotypical role of women has always been central in such issues, from the bearing, nursing, and rearing of offspring to food preparation, cleanliness, and general hygiene, much of the regulating of these matters has affected or been inflicted on women in particular.

Such attitudes, some of them clearly sex-discriminatory, go back to long before anyone ever heard of Christianity. We do not get beyond the third chapter of the Bible before Adam and Eve are covering their private parts in embarrassment (Gen. 3:7), and from then on we are off and running. A whole chapter of Leviticus (12) is dedicated to reproduction and related matters, including various forms of what was considered female uncleanness. And if the Levitical view of menstruation as unclean (Lev. 15:19–30) receives more attention in our era of feminist consciousness, the fact of the matter is that all human bodily emissions, voluntary or involuntary, male or female, including male semen, were stigmatized as unclean (Lev. 15:1–18), though the Hebrew abhorrence of blood (Lev. 17:10–16) made the menses especially repugnant to the Jews.

These Old Testament strictures were adopted by the early Christians from the start.²³¹ Not even Mary’s exalted rank could dispense her from the demands of ritual purity, at least before becoming Theotokos: the mid-second-century apocryphal *Protoevangelium of James*, VII.2–IX.2, has Mary reside in the Temple from age two until twelve, when the priests’ council betroth her to Joseph and send her to live in his house, “Lest she pollute the sanctuary of the Lord” (VIII.2).²³²

Around 247/8 A.D., Dionysius of Alexandria (ca. 195–264), in his *Letter to Basilides* 2,

²²⁹ AASS, Nov. 4:237 (= BHG 2454); Halsall, “Life of St. Thomaïs,” 308–9.

²³⁰ In Talbot, *Holy Women*, 292.

²³¹ The basic study is D. Wendebourg, “Die alttestamentlichen Reinheitsgesetze in der frühen Kirche,” ZKircheng 95 (1984), 149–70.

²³² M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1926), 42.

says menstruating women should not receive communion or even enter the church (*εἰς τὸν οἶκον εἰσιέναι τοῦ θεοῦ*), because “one who is not entirely clean in soul and body is forbidden to approach the holy things or the Holy of Holies” (*εἰς δὲ τὰ ἄγια καὶ τὰ ἄγια τῶν ἀγίων ὁ μὴ πάντῃ καθαρὸς καὶ ψυχῇ καὶ σώματι προσιέναι κωλυθήσεται*).²³³ Timothy of Alexandria (381 A.D.) repeats the restriction on communion, and adds that during her period a woman was not even to be baptized, “until she is purified” (*ἔως ἂν καθαρισθῇ*),²³⁴ a restriction understandable at a time when candidates were immersed in the font naked.²³⁵

The fifth-century Syriac *Testamentum Domini I*, 42, in its list of ascetic practices for widows who served at the altar (see below, D.I.2), prescribes: “If she is menstruous, let her remain in the temple and not approach the altar, not because she is polluted, but [so] that the altar may have honor. Afterwards, when she fasts and bathes, let her be constant [at the altar].”²³⁶ Chapter I, 23, of the same document excludes them and other menstruating women from communion.²³⁷ As Sperry-White remarks in his commentary, there is no need to postulate a Judaeo-Christian provenance for such texts.²³⁸ Old Testament themes are “rediscovered” and enter Gentile-Christian writings massively from the third century on.

As we saw above (A.III.11), the twelfth-century Byzantine canonist Theodore Balsamon, commenting on Dionysius of Alexandria’s ruling just cited, confirms the same for Byzantium: women in menstruation are allowed to pray but should not enter the church proper or receive communion (*εἰς ναὸν θεοῦ εἰσιέναι η̄ μεταλαμβάνειν αὐτὰς τῶν ἀγιασμάτων, οὐ δεῖ*).²³⁹ Even in convents (though the place of nuns in their own churches is beyond the scope of this paper), apparently, some sort of segregation was imposed, to judge from the miraculous cure of Blessed Martha (9th–10th century?), hegumena of the

²³³ C. L. Feltoe, ed., *The Letters and Other Remains of Dionysius of Alexandria*, Cambridge Patristic Texts (Cambridge, 1904), 102–3 = Joannou, *Discipline*, II, 12 (cf. p. 2 for date and authenticity). Cf. F. van de Paverd, “‘Confession’ (*exagoreusis*) and ‘Penance’ (*exomologesis*) in *De lepra* of Methodius of Olympus,” II, *OCP* 45 (1979), 51–53.

²³⁴ Timothy of Alexandria, *Canonical Replies* 6–7, in Joannou, *Discipline*, II, 243–44, 264 (cf. p. 238 for date and authenticity); *The Rudder (Pedalion)*, 718–20.

²³⁵ See the numerous references to stripping at baptism in the 3rd–4th-century sources: *Apostolic Tradition* 21, in *La Tradition apostolique de S. Hippolyte: Essai de reconstitution*, ed. B. Botte, Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen 39 (Münster, 1963), 44–45; Cyril/John II of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* 2, 2, in Cyrille de Jérusalem, *Catéchèses mystagogiques*, ed. A. Piédagnel, trans. P. Paris, 2nd ed., SC 126bis (Paris, 1988), 104–6; Chrysostom, *Baptismal Homily*, II, 11, 24, in Jean Chrysostome, *Huit catéchèses baptismales inédites*, ed. A. Wenger, SC 50bis (Paris, 1970), 139, 147; idem, *Ep. 1 ad Innocentium*, line 154, ed. Malingrey, SC 342:84, cf. 52, and further Chrysostom references in H. M. Riley, *Christian Initiation*, Catholic University of America Studies in Christian Antiquity 17 (Washington, D.C., 1974), 160–70; Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Hom. 14*, 8, ed. R. Tonneau and R. Devreesse, *Les homélies catéchetiques de Théodore de Mopsuestie*, ST 145 (Vatican City, 1949), 401, 417–19; Ambrose, *In Ps. 61 enarr. 32*, PL 14:1180A; cf. F. J. Dölger, *Der Exorcismus im altchristlichen Taufritual: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Studie*, Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums 3.1–2 (Paderborn, 1909), 107–18; E. Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: Baptismal Homilies of the Fourth Century* (Slough, 1971), 20–21, 74–75, 162, 163 n. 21, 167, 188–89, 194, 265.

²³⁶ *Testamentum Domini*, ed. Rahmani, 100; trans. from Sperry-White, “Daily Prayer” (as in note 20 above), 59.

²³⁷ Sperry-White, “Daily Prayer,” 46.

²³⁸ Ibid., 60, against M. Arranz, “Le ‘sancta sanctis’ dans la tradition liturgique des églises,” *ALw* 15 (1973), 60.

²³⁹ In epist. S. Dionysii Alexandrini ad Basilidem episcopum, canon 2, PG 138:465c–468a.

Theotokos monastery in Monembasia, as recounted by Paul, bishop of the same town in Peloponnesus (before Dec. 15, 955–after 959). Because she was hemorrhaging, even during the celebration of the offices she remained in the catechumena of the monastery church (συνέβη οὖν αἰμορρεῖν καὶ διὰ τὴν τοιαύτην ἀσθένειαν, ἐν τοῖς κατηχουμένοις ἐσχόλαζεν τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀγίου ναοῦ), where she was visited and miraculously cured by St. John the Evangelist in the guise of an aged monk.²⁴⁰

2. Sex

But questions of “ritual purity” went far beyond issues of feminine hygiene to include the whole gamut of human sexuality, female and male, alone or in marriage.²⁴¹ The only male parallel to the wholly natural and guiltless phenomenon of menstruation was involuntary nocturnal seminal emission, considered “pollution” and cause for exclusion of laymen and clergy from communion (but not from attending church, as with the women in menstruation) and clergy from celebrating the eucharist.²⁴² As for sexual relations, the issue was *marital sexual relations*, of course, since any other kind were simply anathema and beyond discussion.²⁴³

These attitudes, too, have roots deep in human religiosity long before the Christian era. In Exod. 19:15, Moses on Sinai prepares the Chosen People to meet God in three days with the peremptory command: “Do not go near a woman” (cf. also 1 Sam. [= LXX 1 Kings] 21:4–6). Far from being a Judaeo-Christian specialty, the same taboos prevailed in Graeco-Roman paganism, as reflected in the devotional practices attributed to the pagan Roman emperor Severus Alexander by the *Historia Augusta, Alexander Severus* 29, 2: “His manner of living was as follows: First of all, if it were permissible, *that is to say, if he had not lain with his wife*, in the early morning hours, he would worship in the sanctuary of his Lares, in which he kept statues of the deified emperors.”²⁴⁴

Such attitudes were of course not foreign to Christians in Byzantium and beyond. Around 341 A.D., canon 4 of the Council of Gangra (Çankırı, 105 km northeast of Ankara), capital city of the province of Paphlagonia on the northern coast of Asia Minor, has to anathematize those who refuse to communicate at a eucharist celebrated by a married priest²⁴⁵—this at a time and place when even bishops were still married: recall that the father of Gregory Nazianzen (ca. 330–390), also a Gregory, had been bishop of Nazianzus in Cappadocia (329–374). Not far away there were strong currents favoring celibacy in some strains of early Syriac Christianity.²⁴⁶ So certain Christian attitudes—in this early case, fallout from the extreme asceticism fostered by the teaching of Eustathius

²⁴⁰Wortley, *Récits*, 14/XVI.1–3, pp. 110–13.

²⁴¹On the entire question, see P. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, Lectures on the History of Religions 13 (New York, 1988).

²⁴²See, e.g., Basil the Great (d. 379), *Regulae brevius tractatae* 309, PG 31:1301c–1303a; 5th-century Syriac *Testamentum Domini* I.23, ed. Rahmani, 46; other sources in van de Paverd, “‘Confession’ and ‘Penance,’” 52–53.

²⁴³For Byzantium, see Laiou, “Sex, Consent, and Coercion,” 130–32.

²⁴⁴E. Hohl, ed., *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, I, *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana* (Leipzig, 1965), 272–73: “usu vivendi eidem hic fuit: primum ut, si facultas esset, id est si non cum uxore cubuisse, matutinis horis in lario suo, in quo et divos principes . . . habebat ac maiorum effigies, rem divinam faciebat”; English trans., D. Magie, *The Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, II, Loeb (London, 1924), 235 (emphasis added).

²⁴⁵Joannou, *Discipline*, I.2:91. A small gathering of thirteen bishops, the synod promulgated twenty canons.

²⁴⁶G. Nedungatt, “The Covenanters of the Early Syriac-Speaking Church,” *OCP* 39 (1973), 191–215, 419–44.

of Sebaste (ca. 300–d. after 377)²⁴⁷—far from being always the result of official church policy, were prejudices the church was at pains to control. In fact, orthodox Christianity, though unalterably opposed to extramarital sex, and at times only grudging in its acceptance of its marital exercise, consistently defended the sanctity of the married sexual union against all comers of the dualist and spiritualist camps.

Nevertheless, negative attitudes toward sex even in marriage continued to afflict Byzantine Christians too.²⁴⁸ Marital relations on Sunday defiled the Lord's Day.²⁴⁹ Early canons exclude spouses from the sacrament if they had had intercourse the night before,²⁵⁰ a rule that had passed into Byzantine legislation by the time of the Council of Trullo in 692: canon 13 requires continence of the clergy the eve of a day they are to officiate at the altar, “for those approaching the altar when the holy gifts are handled must be wholly continent (*έγκρατεῖς εἶναι ἐν πᾶσιν*), that they may obtain what they ask sincerely of God.”²⁵¹

The rule of continence before communion also applied to the laity, as we see in the synodal response of September 1168 that married people should abstain from sexual intercourse for three days before going to communion, and—astonishingly—even remain continent the day of their marriage, under penalty of canonical sanctions.²⁵² On the outskirts of the empire this sort of thing could evolve into some surprising views, as well as provoke, by way of reaction, a dose of common sense. In the *Въпрашание Кюриково*, or *Kirik's Inquiry*, a series of moral “casus conscientiae” posed by Hieromonk Kirik to Bishop Nifont of Novgorod (1131–56), the bishop ridicules Kirik for asking if marital intercourse during Lent bars one from communion. And he shrugs off the question of sexual relations between two girls with the startling comment, “Better than doing it with a man.” But even this in many ways astonishingly “liberal” document deals negatively with issues of female “uncleanliness.”²⁵³

Needless to say, there is nothing peculiarly “oriental” or “Byzantine” about any of this.²⁵⁴ In the West, analogous restrictions were once found in any traditional Latin man-

²⁴⁷Cf. J. Gribomont, “Eustathe de Sébaste,” *DSp* 4.2:1708–12, and *DHGE* 16:26–33; idem, “Le monachisme au IVe s. en Asie Mineure: De Gangres au messalianisme,” *Studia Patristica* 2, TU 64 (Berlin, 1957), 400–415; idem, “S. Basile et le monachisme enthousiaste,” *Irénikon* 53 (1980), 123–44.

²⁴⁸See P. Viscuso, “Purity and Sexual Defilement in Late Byzantine Theology,” *OCP* 57 (1991), 399–408.

²⁴⁹Rydén, *Life of St. Andrew the Fool*, II, lines 2869–92.

²⁵⁰Timothy of Alexandria (381 A.D.), *Canonical Replies* 5, in Joannou, *Discipline*, II, 242–43.

²⁵¹Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Trullo*, 84–87 (trans. modified).

²⁵²*RegPatr* 1083; cf. Viscuso, “Purity.” See also note 260 below.

²⁵³Cited extensively in J. Fennell, *A History of the Russian Church to 1448* (London-New York, 1995), 74–76, from *Памятники древне-русского канонического права*, part I: *Памятники XI–XII в.*, 2nd ed., *Вопросы Кирика, Саввы и Илии, с ответами Нифонта, епископа новгородского, и других иерархических лиц, 1130–1156 г.*, Русская Историческая Библиотека 6 (St. Petersburg, 1908), 21–62. On the same topic, see E. Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs, 900–1700* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1989), esp. 163–72, 250–60.

²⁵⁴On sexuality in Byzantium, see J. Herrin, “Sexuality,” *ODB* III:1185 and the references given there; L. Garland, “Be Amorous but Be Chaste . . . : Sexual Morality in Byzantine Learned and Vernacular Romance,” *BMGS* 14 (1990), 62–120; A. Kazhdan, “Byzantine Hagiography and Sex in the Fifth to Twelfth Centuries,” *DOP* 44 (1990), 131–43. The much-discussed book of J. Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (New York, 1994), esp. 162ff, 199ff, also deals with issues of sexuality in Byzantium, since Byzantine Orthodox rituals of “brotherhood” (*ἀδελφοποίησις*) and “adoption” (*τεκνοποίησις*) form the backbone of his argument. I find Boswell’s study tendentious and inadequate, both in argument and in its translations from the Greek. Cf. my remarks in *Newsweek* (June 20, 1994), 76–77; the review of B. D. Shaw, “A Groom of One’s Own? The Medieval Church and the Question of Gay Marriage,” *New Republic* (July 18 and 25, 1994), 33–41; and the ensuing discussion *ibid.* (October 3, 1994), 39–41. These rituals, which the U.S. press breathlessly

ual of moral theology. And in the time of Gregory of Tours (d. 594), early Merovingian superstition held that spouses who engaged in sexual intercourse on Sundays would beget deformed progeny.²⁵⁵

In the case of married Christian clergy, matrimonial relations were complicated by the requirement of sexual abstinence on the day preceding the celebration of the liturgy.²⁵⁶ We find it, for instance, as early as 692, in canon 13 of Trullo.²⁵⁷ It reappears in the so-called *Constitutiones ecclesiasticae* 156, a canonical anthology of doubtful authorship attributed to Patriarch Nicephorus I (806–815).²⁵⁸ Canon 7 of the *Nomocanon* of Manuel Malaxos²⁵⁹ included in the collection reads: “It is not necessary that a priest celebrate the liturgy each day (*ιερουργεῖν καθ' ἐκάστην*). For it is suitable that a priest not celebrate on a day of union with his wife. Let a priest perform the unbloody sacrifice only on those days when he completely abstains from worldly sexual intercourse with his wife, for thus the canons of the Holy Fathers wish.”²⁶⁰ The text goes on to cite as its authorities Exod. 19:15 and 1 Sam. [= LXX 1 Kings] 21:4–6.

This abstinence from marital relations, which Matthew Blastares (1335 A.D.) extends for three days,²⁶¹ was codified in the very first rubric of the *diataxis* of Philotheus Kokkinos, an Athonite rubric book composed while Philotheus, later patriarch of Constantinople (1353–54, 1364–76), was still hegumen of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos, as the incipit of the text itself informs us—thus before he became bishop of Heraclea in 1347:

Μέλλων ὁ ἱερεὺς τὴν θείαν ἐπιτελεῖν μυσταγωγίαν ὄφείλει . . . τὴν καρδίαν ὅση δύναμις ἀπὸ πονηρῶν τηρήσαι λογισμῶν, ἐγκρατεύεσθαί τε μικρὸν ἀφ' ἐσπέρας καὶ ἐγρηγορέναι μέχρι τοῦ τῆς ἱερουργίας καιροῦ.²⁶²

The priest who is going to celebrate the Divine Liturgy should . . . keep his heart free of impure thoughts as far as possible, remain continent from the evening before, and be vigilant until the time of the divine service.

acclaimed as shocking “discoveries,” are old hat to anyone even superficially acquainted with the Byzantine ritual and its relevant literature: cf., for example, the standard handbook by P. de Meester, *Liturgia bizantina*, book 2, part 6: *Rituale-benedizionale bizantino* (Rome, 1929), 357–71.

²⁵⁵Gregory of Tours, *Libri octo miraculorum: Liber de virtutibus sancti Martini episcopi*, II, 24, ed. B. Krusch, MGH, *ScriptRerMerov*, I (Hannover, 1885), 617; cf. I. N. Wood, “Early Merovingian Devotion in Town and Country,” in *The Church in Town and Countryside*, ed. D. Baker, Studies in Church History 16 (Oxford, 1979), 62–63.

²⁵⁶Viscuso, “Purity,” 403–4.

²⁵⁷Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Trullo*, 85–86.

²⁵⁸Cf. H. G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 12, *Byzantinisches Handbuch*, I (Munich, 1959), 490.

²⁵⁹Cf. *ibid.*, 147.

²⁶⁰J. P. Pitra, ed., *Spicilegium Solesmense*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1852–58; repr. Graz, 1963), 4:413–14. Nor was this an exclusively clerical regulation. Canon 6 of the *Quaestiones et responsa* in the same collection, § 145, imposes on the married laity abstinence on Saturdays and Sundays, so as “to offer themselves to God spiritual sacrifices”—doubtless, because those were the traditional days of eucharistic celebration (*ibid.*, 410–11); and *Nomocanon* 18 says women should not communicate during their period (PG 104:1054). Similar sexual taboos are found in the *Testamentum Domini* I.23, ed. Rahmani, 46–47.

²⁶¹Viscuso, “Purity,” 414.

²⁶²The best edition is P. N. Tremellas, *Ai τρεῖς Λειτουργίαι κατὰ τοὺς ἐν Ἀθήναις κώδικας*, Texte und Forschungen zur byzantinisch-neugriechischen Philologie 15 (Athens, 1935), 1–16, here 1. On Philotheus’ *diataxis* (and on *diataxeis* in general), see R. F. Taft, “Mount Athos: A Late Chapter in the History of the ‘Byzantine Rite,’” *DOP* 42 (1988), 192–94; idem, *Great Entrance*, xxxv–viii; idem, *Byzantine Rite*, 81–83.

From Philotheus' *diataxis* the rubric made its way into the printed eucharologies via the 1526 editio princeps of Demetrios Doukas, where it (or some variant of it) remains to this day.

Such sexual taboos, reflecting age-old pre-Christian notions of sexuality and ritual purity, confirm once again what I said at the beginning of this paper: that religion and sex have always been intertwined as major drives of humankind and as two of the most important components of human culture and history.

3. The Rite of “Churching”

Negative attitudes toward sex and feminine hygiene perdured well into “Byzance après Byzance,”²⁶³ even affecting church ritual.²⁶⁴ One later refinement concerns the “churching” or “purification” of a mother from her “uncleanness” forty days after child-birth.²⁶⁵ Though the later (but not the earliest)²⁶⁶ ritual contains a petition to “purify [the mother] of all uncleanness” (*καθάρισον . . . ἀπὸ πάντος ρύπου*),²⁶⁷ my colleague Arranz has shown that the original intent of the fortieth-day ceremonial in the pre-iconoclast rite concerned the “churching” not of the mother but of the newborn child.²⁶⁸ The later ritual is derived from the Purification of Mary in Luke 2:22–39 as prescribed in the Mosaic Law (Lev. 12:2–8; cf. Exod. 13:2, 12). Note also that the earliest manuscripts of the rite do not preclude the introduction of a female child into the sanctuary during the “churching,” as does the later ritual.²⁶⁹

D. WHY?

One must resist the impulse to presume that women were treated as they were in church simply because of the systematic relegation of women to second place in the male-dominated culture of the times.²⁷⁰ While such discrimination was of course operative, it was by no means the only factor, nor even always the main one.

What, then, were some of the other reasons for the place assigned to women in the Byzantine church? I would identify three principal ones, all related: order, or *τάξις*, decorum, and security.

I. Τάξις

In late antiquity—indeed, until after World War II—our contemporary western youth-culture casualness and breezy informality would have been an unimaginable affront to accepted mores. The very first witness to the eucharist, St. Paul in 1 Cor. 11:17–

²⁶³ See, for example, Viscuso, “Purity.”

²⁶⁴ Levin, *Sex and Society*, 169–72.

²⁶⁵ See the new study by S. Roll, “The Churching of Women after Childbirth: An Old Rite Raising New Issues,” *Questions liturgiques* 76 (1995), 206–29, though there is not much on eastern or Byzantine sources.

²⁶⁶ Cf. 8th-century Barberini gr. 336, in Parenti and Velkovska, *Barberini gr. 336*, § 113.2; Arranz, “Sacraments I,” 3:292.

²⁶⁷ Goar, Εὐχολόγιον, 267. The prayer appears in the earliest codices: ibid., 269–71; Parenti and Velkovska, *Barberini gr. 336*, § 113.2; G. Passarelli, *Leucologio Cryptense ΓΒ VII* (sec. X), *Analekta Vlatadon* 36 (Thessalonike, 1982), §§ 128, 178; cf. Arranz, “Sacraments I,” 3:292–301.

²⁶⁸ On the whole question, see Arranz, “Sacraments I,” 2:44–45, 89–90; 3:292–301.

²⁶⁹ Compare Goar, Εὐχολόγιον, 268–69; Arranz, “Sacraments I,” 3:293–94 and n. 10.

²⁷⁰ See references in note 1, esp. Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme à Byzance*.

34, is preoccupied not with doctrine but with order. It was equally a concern of Clement of Rome during the last decade of the first century. His *First Letter to the Corinthians*, the earliest Christian document to use the terms τάξις and “laity” (λαϊκός) (40:5), exhorts all to strive to be pleasing to God “each according to his own rank” (ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ιδίῳ τάγματι) (41:1).²⁷¹ Canon 18 of the first ecumenical council, Nicaea I in 325 A.D., is also about order, forbidding deacons to give communion to presbyters, as was customary in some places like Alexandria, or to receive the sacrament before the bishops and presbyters.²⁷²

Hence not every restriction of access or limitation of place in church can be interpreted as gender-discriminating. Such prohibitions were general: canon 69 of Trullo explicitly forbids not just women but all the laity to enter the sanctuary.²⁷³ To subject such ordinances to a critique that might be “politically correct” in today’s terms would be anachronistic in the framework of the culture we are trying to understand.

So τάξις, “a place for everyone and everyone in his/her place,” was a rule of thumb no one would have imagined challenging in the culture with which we are dealing. Lest we be tempted to think this is an anachronism, ask anyone familiar with the intricate minuet that protocol officers must still go through in arranging precedence in diplomatic or ecumenical meetings today.

1. The Apostolic Constitutions (ca. 380)

By the third to fourth century this concern for order is formulated in a new Christian literary genre appropriately entitled “church orders.”²⁷⁴ The longest of them, from the region of Antioch ca. 380, the *Apostolic Constitutions* II, 57:2–4, 10–13, compares the church to a well-ordered ship in which everyone has a fixed place, “the women separately,” of course, according to age and status, with separate places for married women, elderly women and widows, young women and virgins. And “if anyone be found sitting out of place, let him be rebuked by the deacon . . . and removed to his proper place.”²⁷⁵ Similarly, book VIII, 13:14, establishes a fixed order for communion and gives detailed instructions for its execution.²⁷⁶

2. The Testamentum Domini (5th century)

The fifth-century Syriac *Testamentum Domini* I, 23, enjoins a similarly detailed order of precedence at communion: “Let the clergy receive first, in the following order: the bishop, then the presbyters, after them the deacons, next the widows, then the readers,

²⁷¹ Clément de Rome, *Épître aux Corinthiens*, ed. A. Jaubert, SC 167 (Paris, 1971), 166–67.

²⁷² Joannou, *Discipline*, I.1:39–40; N. P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols. (London-Washington, D.C., 1990), I, 14–16.

²⁷³ Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Trullo*, 151. The same canon makes an exception for the emperor who could enter the sanctuary when making his offering (see D.I.3 below), an exception later Byzantine sources will maintain: e.g., Nicetas Stethatos of Stoudios (d. ca. 1090), *Ep. 8*, 3, in Nicétas Stéthatos, *Opuscules et lettres*, ed. J. Darrouzès, SC 81 (Paris, 1961), 282–85; cf. Cabasilas, *Commentary* 24.2, in Nicolas Cabasilas, *Explication de la Divine Liturgie*, trans. and notes by S. Salaville, 2nd ed. with the Greek text, reviewed and augmented by R. Bornert, J. Gouillard, and P. Périchon, SC 4bis (Paris, 1967), 162–63.

²⁷⁴ On this genre, see most recently B. Steiner, *Vertext Traditionis: Die Gattung der altchristlichen Kirchenordnungen*, Beihefte zur ZNW 63 (Berlin-New York, 1992).

²⁷⁵ SC 320:310–17; translation adapted from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1969–), 7:421. Cf. also book II, 58:1, 5–6, SC 320:320–23.

²⁷⁶ SC 336:208–10.

then the subdeacons, and finally those with special charisms and the newly baptized and the boys. The people, however, [receive] in this order: the elderly men, the celibates, then the rest. From among the women, first the deaconesses, then the others.”²⁷⁷

3. Ambrose and Theodosius I (390 A.D.)

The assignment of places in church evidenced from these early church orders is but one more symptom of the concern for good order so characteristic of late antique culture in general, and hence, inevitably, of matters ecclesiastical too. Not even the emperor was exempt from this discipline, as we see in the oft-repeated story of St. Ambrose (d. 397), bishop of Milan, and Emperor Theodosius I (379–395) as told by Theodoret (ca. 393–ca. 466), bishop of Cyrrhus from 423, in his *Church History* V, 18.19–23, written between 444 and 450. The scene takes place during the liturgy of Theodosius’ restoration to communion after Ambrose had excommunicated him and forced him to do penance for the massacre of Thessalonike in 390:

When the moment had come to offer the gifts at the holy altar . . . [Theodosius] rose and entered [the sanctuary]. After offering, however, he stayed inside [the sanctuary], by the chancel, as he was wont to do [in Constantinople]. But again the great Ambrose did not remain silent, but taught him the distinction of places. First he asked him if he wanted something. But when the emperor said he was waiting for communion in the holy mysteries, Ambrose sent word to him by the head deacon that “The interior, O emperor, is open to the priests alone. To all others it is closed and inaccessible. Go out, therefore, and take your place with the others. For the purple makes emperors, not priests.” This advice, too, the most faithful emperor received gladly, indicating in reply that he had remained within the chancel not from presumption, but because he learned this custom in Constantinople. . . . On returning to Constantinople, Theodosius kept within the bounds of piety he had learnt from the great bishop. For when a divine feast brought him once again into the divine temple, after offering his gifts at the holy altar he went out forthwith. But the head bishop of the church (at that time it was Nectarius) remonstrated, “Why didn’t you stay inside [the sanctuary]?”²⁷⁸

So in Constantinople the emperor used to remain in the sanctuary from the moment he offered his gifts at the altar until communion, that is, during the entire liturgy. For in the rite of the Great Church the emperor offered his gifts at the altar during the Introit at the beginning of the service.²⁷⁹ According to the Milanese usage, the emperor offered his gifts at the altar but did not remain there until communion, as Theodosius learned the hard way. That the latter was the custom at Constantinople is confirmed by the reaction of Patriarch Nectarius (381–397), whom Theodosius surprised by introducing the usage of Milan upon his return to Constantinople. From then on the Ambrosian rule was observed in the Great Church too, as another fifth-century Byzantine historian, Sozomen, informs us in his account of the same incident.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ *Testamentum Domini*, ed. Rahmani, 46–47.

²⁷⁸ Theodoret, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. L. Parmentier, GCS 44 (Leipzig, 1911), 312.13–313.11 = PG 82:1236C–37B. On this story and its liturgical implications, see also Taft, *Great Entrance*, 26–28.

²⁷⁹ *De cerim.* I, 1, 9, 10, 32 (23), 35 (26), 39 (30), 44 (35); Vogt I, 10–13, 58–60, 69, 122–23, 134–35, 154–55, 170; cf. Mathews, *Early Churches*, 146–47; Taft, *Great Entrance*, 30. See also note 273 above.

²⁸⁰ *Hist. eccles.* VII, 25.5–13: “It was the custom for the emperors to attend church services (ἐκκλησιάζειν) in the sanctuary (ἐν τῷ ἵεροτείῳ) separately, beyond the barrier set for the rest of the people. Considering this custom flattery or indisipline, he [Ambrose] caused the place of the emperors in the churches to be

II. Decorum and Security

Apart from the fact that in some cultures and periods it was not socially acceptable for the sexes to mingle freely, a concern for decorum in rough-and-tumble late antiquity was doubtless a further motive for their separation in church. The admonition of *Apostolic Constitutions* VIII, 13:14, to avoid all commotion at communion, approaching “in order (κατὰ τάξιν), with respect and piety, and without disturbance (ἀνευ θορύβου),”²⁸¹ is not to be taken lightly. In late antiquity, comportment in church left more than a little to be desired, and discipline and decorum were insisted on with reason. Chrysostom’s *De baptismo Christi* 4 depicts the distribution of communion in Antioch as very rough and tumble: “We don’t approach with awe but kicking, striking, filled with anger, shoving our neighbors, full of disorder.”²⁸² In such circumstances, having men and women receive communion separately was based on more than gender discrimination.

The fact that baptism was administered to adult neophytes stark naked was an obvious reason for keeping the sexes apart at baptism.²⁸³ The kiss of peace provided a further motive. As I have shown elsewhere, normally women in church in Byzantium did not exchange the kiss with members of the opposite sex, for equally obvious reasons.²⁸⁴ This was true even of the imperial party, as we see in *De ceremoniis* I, 9.²⁸⁵

Security, though admittedly involving a certain paternalistic care that placed women and children on more or less the same level, was another real preoccupation that recommended the separation of men and women. For anyone who reads the documents instead of being mesmerized by the romantic myth of the “Golden Age of Patristic Liturgy,” it is not hard to imagine why it was not prudent for respectable women to mingle with the men in public assemblies, or to be out at night in a metropolis like Antioch or Constantinople.

In 379, the largely Arian citizenry of the capital stoned the Orthodox bishop, Gregory Nazianzen, during the Easter Vigil in the Anastasia church of the Orthodox, an outrage in which even the virgins and monks took part.²⁸⁶ A few years later, Chrysostom’s *Homily on the Martyrs*, preached in Antioch before 398, testifies to the fact that his flock tended

placed before the sanctuary rails (πρὸ τῶν δρυφάκτων τοῦ ἱερατείου), so that he held the place of precedence in front of the people, but the priests held precedence over him. The emperor Theodosius approved of this excellent tradition, as did his successors, and we see that it has been observed from then until now” (GCS 50:340 = PG 67:1496B–97A). This is confirmed by the Byzantine imperial ceremonials: after offering their gifts the sovereigns leave the sanctuary and assist at the liturgy from the metatorion, though in some of the later sources they enter the sanctuary again to receive communion. On the whole question see my “Excursus to Chapter X: The Emperor’s Communion,” in Taft, *Communion and Final Rites*.

²⁸¹ SC 336:208–10.

²⁸² PG 49:371 (= CPG 4335); cf. also idem, *In diem natalem* 7, PG 49:360–61 (= CPG 4334).

²⁸³ See note 235 above.

²⁸⁴ Taft, *Great Entrance*, 389–92; Featherstone, “Life of St. Matrona,” 26, chap. 7. See, however, a contrary witness in the “Life of St. Mary of Egypt,” 35, trans. Kouli, 90: “according to custom she gave the monk [Zosimas] the kiss of love on his mouth.”

²⁸⁵ Vogt I, 56–57, 60–62.

²⁸⁶ Gregory Nazianzen, *Ep.* 77, 1–3, in Saint Grégoire de Nazianze, *Lettres*, ed. P. Gallay, 2 vols., Collection des Universités de France (Paris, 1964, 1967), I, 95 = Gregor von Nazianz, *Briefe*, ed. P. Gallay, GCS 51 (Berlin, 1969), 66 = PG 37:141–44; idem, *Carmen de seipso* 1, 660ff, PG 37:1074–75 (= CPG 3036); cf. Dagron, “Les moines,” 262. The monks of Constantinople were a troublesome lot: cf. J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom—Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (London, 1995), 123–24.

to conclude their pious all-night vigils with carousing in the taverns. The scene describes a typical late antique all-night cathedral vigil concluded by a morning eucharist:²⁸⁷

You have turned the night into day by means of holy vigils ($\deltaιὰ τῶν παννυχίδων τῶν ἱερῶν$). Don't change day into night with intemperance and gluttony . . . and lascivious songs. You honored the martyrs by your presence [in church], by hearing [the lessons] . . . honor them also by going home. . . . Think how ridiculous it is after such gatherings, after solemn vigils, after the reading of Sacred Scripture, after participating in the Holy Mysteries . . . that men and women are seen passing the whole day in the taverns.²⁸⁸

Then as now, in East and West, alcohol made the nights less than safe for those interested in staying out of trouble. Ambrose in Milan (339–397),²⁸⁹ Augustine (d. 430) in North Africa,²⁹⁰ and Caesarius, bishop of Arles (503–542) in southern Gaul,²⁹¹ all witness to the bibulous vigils of their flocks (according to Caesarius, *Sermo 55*, 4–5, even the clergy took their draughts). Alcohol abuse on feast days was such a problem in Latin North Africa²⁹² that Augustine had to admonish the newly baptized children not to show up drunk at vespers Easter evening.²⁹³ His congregation, he tells them, seems like “a few grains of wheat” among the chaff of “many thieves, drunkards, blasphemers, and theater-goers.”²⁹⁴ Basil the Great (d. 379)²⁹⁵ and Caesarius²⁹⁶ are among many other bishops of late antiquity who complain that even during the holy season of Lent their flocks passed the night in pleasures quite other than the *pannychis*. In Constantinople, Barhadbešabbha ‘Arbaïa, in *History* 21, recounts how Patriarch Nestorius had to take measures against even the monks of Constantinople carousing in taverns.²⁹⁷

Things were not much better in daylight. Ca. 501 Zosimus, *New History* V, 23, recounts what Dagron calls Constantinople’s own “St. Bartholomew’s Massacre” in 403,²⁹⁸ during the troubles in Constantinople surrounding Chrysostom, when the monks occupied the Great Church. “This enraged the commoners and soldiers, who, anxious to humble the monks’ insolence, went out when the signal was given, and violently and indiscriminately killed them all, until the church was filled with bodies.”²⁹⁹ For women, a worst-case scenario is recounted by Sozomen, *Church History* VII, 16.8, which details the uproar caused in Constantinople when a woman was raped in church by a deacon.³⁰⁰

²⁸⁷ On vigils in late antiquity, see Taft, *Hours*, 165–90.

²⁸⁸ PG 50:663–64 (= CPG 4359); trans. Taft, *Hours*, 170.

²⁸⁹ *De Helia et ieunio* 62, CSEL 32.2:448–49 = PL 14:719AB.

²⁹⁰ *Confessions* VI.2:2, CSEL 33:114–16.

²⁹¹ *Sermo 55*, 1–5, CCSL 103:241–44 = SC 243:476–85. The best work on Caesarius and the liturgy is K. Berg, *Cäsarius von Arles: Ein Bischof des sechsten Jahrhunderts erschließt das liturgische Leben seiner Zeit*, Frühes Christentum, Forschungen und Perspektiven 1 (Thaur, 1994).

²⁹² Cf. *Sermo 252*, 4, PL 38:1174; *In ep. Joh. tract. 4*, 4, PL 35:2007.

²⁹³ *Sermo 225*, 4, PL 38:1018.

²⁹⁴ *Sermo 252*, 4, PL 38:1174.

²⁹⁵ *Homily 14 on Drunkards*, 1, PG 31:444–45.

²⁹⁶ *Sermo 6*, 2–3, CCSL 103:31–32.

²⁹⁷ PO 9:528–29.

²⁹⁸ Dagron, “Les moines,” 264–65.

²⁹⁹ Zosimus, *Historia nova*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB (Bonn, 1837), 278–79 = L. Mendelssohn (Leipzig, 1887), 244–45; English from *New History*, translated with a commentary by R. T. Ridley, *Byzantina Australiensia* 2 (Canberra, 1982), 111.

³⁰⁰ GCS 50:323 = PG 67:1461B. Socrates, *Hist. eccles.* V, 19.5–10, gives a variant version of the same incident: GCS, n.s., 1:293–94 = PG 67:616–20A.

Even when things were not violent, they were hardly orderly.³⁰¹ Chrysostom in Constantinople (398–404) accuses his congregation of roaming around during church services,³⁰² of either ignoring the preacher³⁰³ or pushing and shoving to hear him (above, A.II.1), when not bored or downright exasperated with him;³⁰⁴ of talking, especially during the Scripture lessons;³⁰⁵ leaving before the services are over;³⁰⁶ and, in general, causing an uproar and acting (the words are Chrysostom's) as if they were in the forum or barbershop—or worse still, in a tavern or whorehouse.³⁰⁷ The women cause distractions (even for the ministering clergy)³⁰⁸ by the way they deck themselves out in finery, makeup, and jewelry.³⁰⁹ The youth, whom Chrysostom calls “filth (*καθάρματα*) rather than youth,” spend their time in church laughing, joking, and talking.³¹⁰ The large crowd at the Easter Vigil is more a mob than a congregation. They come to church like they go to the baths or the forum, without devotion or spiritual profit. “It would be better to stay at home,” Chrysostom concludes.³¹¹

³⁰¹To be fair, of course, one can cite other texts in which the church fathers praise the people for their devotion and participation in church services: several examples in T. K. Carroll, *Preaching the Word*, Message of the Fathers of the Church 11 (Wilmington, Del., 1984), esp. chap. 3. On this and other questions concerning preaching in this period, the best study, with extensive bibliography, is Olivar, *Predicación*, esp. chap. 9 and, concerning Chrysostom and his hearers, 774–76. Cf. idem, “La duración de la predicación antigua,” *Liturgica 3*, Scripta et documenta 17 (Montserrat, 1966), 143–84; R. F. Taft, “Sermon,” ODB III:1880–81, and the bibliography there. For the West: V. Monachino, *La cura pastorale a Milano, Cartagine e Roma nel secolo IV*, Analecta Gregoriana 41 (Rome, 1947); idem, *S. Ambrogio e la cura pastorale a Milano nel secolo IV* (Milan, 1973); H. G. Beck, *The Pastoral Care of Souls in South-East France during the Sixth Century*, Analecta Gregoriana 51 (Rome, 1950); F. van der Meer, *Augustine the Bishop: The Life and Work of a Father of the Church* (London, 1978), 168–77; P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London, 1967), esp. chaps. 22–23.

³⁰²In *Mt. hom. 19*, 7–9, PG 57:283–85.

³⁰³In *Mt. hom. 32/33*, 6, PG 57:384–85.

³⁰⁴De *sacerdotio* V, 8: Jean Chrysostome, *Sur le sacerdoce*, ed. Malingrey, 302–5 = PG 48:677. Again, to be fair, preachers in late antiquity were applauded as well as booed: see the works cited in note 301, esp. Olivar, *Predicación*; also idem, “Sobre las ovaciones tributadas a los antiguos predicadores cristianos,” *Didascalia* 12 (1982), 13–43; A. Quacquarelli, *Retorica e liturgia antenicena* (Rome, 1960), 89–93; Th. Klauser, “Akklamation,” RAC 1:226–27; A. Stuiber, “Beifall,” RAC 2:91–103, esp. 99–102; F. J. Dölger, “Klingeln, Tanz und Händeklatschen im Gottesdienst der christlichen Melitianer in Ägypten,” *Antike und Christentum* 4 (1934), 245–64, esp. 254ff; J. Ernst, “Beifallsbezeugen zur Predikt,” *Theologisch-praktische Monatsschrift* 27 (1917), 568ff.

³⁰⁵See the citations in this section. Origen had made the same complaint more than a century earlier: see *In Gen. hom. 10*, 1; *In Ex. hom. 12*, 2, in *Origenes Werke*, ed. W. A. Baehrens, VI.1, GCS 29 (Leipzig, 1920), 93, 263–64. And Caesarius of Arles complains of the same abuse repeatedly: see *Sermones* 55, 1, 4; 72, 1; 73, 1–5; 78, 1; 80, 1; CCSL 103:241–44, 303, 306–9, 323, 328–89 = SC 243:476–85; 330:180–81, 190–99, 237–44, 256–57. Though what today we would call “patriarchy” was certainly behind such prescriptions as canon 70 of Trullo (692 A.D.), stating that women should not talk during the liturgy (Nedungatt and Featherstone, *Trullo*, 152), adumbrated long before in 1 Cor. 14:34, the problem was a real one.

³⁰⁶They do the same in Antioch: Chrysostom, *De baptismo Christi* 4, 1, PG 49:370–71 (= CPG 4335), and in Egypt, at least according to Ps.-Eusebius of Alexandria (5th–6th century), *Sermo 16, De die dominica*, PG 86:416 (= CPG 5525); cf. F. Nau, “Notes sur diverses homélies pseudoépigraphiques, sur les œuvres attribuées à Eusèbe d'Alexandrie et sur un nouveau manuscrit de la chaîne *contra Severianos*,” ROC 13 (1908), 406–34. In Arles, Caesarius even ran out of church after them, according to his *Vita I*, 27: *Passiones vitaqe sanctorum aevi Merovingici et antiquiorum aliquot*, ed. B. Krusch, MGH, *ScriptRerMerov.* III (Hannover, 1896), 466–67.

³⁰⁷See the Chrysostom citations below.

³⁰⁸See the anecdote recounted above, A.III.10.

³⁰⁹In *Mt. hom. 73/74*, 3, PG 58:67; In *I Tim. 2, hom. 8*, 1–3, PG 62:541–44.

³¹⁰In *Acta hom. 24*, 4, PG 60:190.

³¹¹In *Acta hom. 29*, 3, PG 60:218; cf. also *In Mt. hom. 19*, 7–9, PG 57:283–85.

The way the sexes behave in church just exacerbated the general scandal of churchgoing in Constantinople, according to as Chrysostom, *In 1 Cor. Hom. 36*, 5–6. The presider greets those in church with “peace,” but the reality he has to face is more like “all-out warfare everywhere” (*πολὺς ὁ πόλεμος πανταχοῦ*), as Chrysostom says with his customary frankness:

Great is the tumult, great the confusion here in church. Our assemblies differ in nothing from a tavern, so loud is the laughter, so great the disturbance, just as in the baths, in the markets, with everyone shouting and causing an uproar. . . . The church is not a barbershop, a perfumer’s, nor any other shop in the forum. . . . [In church] we behave more impudently than dogs, and pay as much respect to God as to a whore. . . . The church is not a place of conversation but of teaching. But now it is no different from the forum . . . nor probably even from the stage, from the way the women who assemble here adorn themselves more wantonly than the unchaste ones there. Hence we see that many profligates are enticed here by them, and if anyone is trying or intending to corrupt a woman, I suppose no place seems better than the church.³¹²

And on, and on. Rich Antiochenes in their finery make churchgoing a fashion parade, Chrysostom tells us.³¹³ As for the sexes, they have turned the church from a sheepfold into a stall full of manure, “For indeed if one could see what is said by men and women at each synaxis, you would see that their talk is filthier than excrement” (*κόπρος*).³¹⁴ An exasperated Chrysostom’s sermon *In Mt. hom. 73/74*, 3—he was probably preaching at Vespers since he cites Ps. 140, the classical vesperal psalm—says they need a wall in church to keep the men and women apart:

Listen first to what you say in the psalm, “Let my prayer rise like incense before you” (Ps. 140/141:2). But since it is not incense but stinking smoke that rises from you and your actions, what punishment do you not deserve to undergo? What is the stinking smoke? Many enter [the church] to gape at the beauty of the women, others curious to see the blooming youth of the boys. . . . What are you doing, man? Do you curiously look for female beauty, and not shudder at insulting in this way the temple of God? Does the church seem to you a whorehouse, less honorable than the forum? In the forum you are ashamed to be seen giving women the once-over, but in God’s temple, when God himself is speaking and warning you about these things, you are committing fornication and adultery at the very time you are hearing not to! . . . Indeed, you ought to have an interior wall (*τείχος*) to separate you from the women, but since you don’t want to, our fathers thought it necessary to wall you off with these boards (*τοῖς σανίσιν ὑμᾶς ταύταις διατειχίσατ*).³¹⁵ For I hear from elders that formerly there were not these barriers (*τειχία*), “Since in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female” (Gal. 3:28). In the time of the apostles the men and women were equal, for the men were men and the women women. But now it is completely different: the women have taken on the habits of courtesans, and the men are no different from frantic stallions.³¹⁶

³¹²PG 61:313–14; trans. adapted from NPNF, ser. 1, XII:220–21.

³¹³*In 2 Thess. hom. 3*, 4, PG 62:483–84.

³¹⁴*In Mt. hom. 88/89*, 4, PG 58:780–81.

³¹⁵Such a separation was apparently not in force in North Africa: Augustine complains that in church the men move in and out, chattering and making dates with their lady friends (*Enarr. in Ps. 39*, 8, CCSL 38:430–31), as indeed he himself did before his conversion, according to his *Confessions* III, iii.5, CCSL 27:29.

³¹⁶PG 58:676–77.

Even allowing for rhetorical hyperbole,³¹⁷ in those days things were obviously somewhat less sedate in church than they are today. No one should be surprised, then, at the peremptory diaconal commands in early Greek liturgy: “Get up!” (*Ὀρθοί*), “Stand aright!” (*Στῶμεν καλῶς*),³¹⁸ “Keep quiet!” (*Παύσασθε*), “Pay attention!” (*Πρόσχωμεν*)—to which Chrysostom, doubtless, would like to have added: “Leave the women alone!”

E. CONCLUSIONS

The weight of the earliest Byzantine evidence clearly tilts more in favor of considering the galleries or catechumena a preferred “women’s space” during times of worship. But there is nothing to prove that women *were restricted to the galleries*, nor that this space was *reserved for their exclusive liturgical use*, that is, that during services only the women were in the galleries, that they were nowhere but in the galleries, and that no one else was there with them. Procopius (above, A.III.6) and the *Narratio de S. Sophia* (A.III.8) put the women in both the galleries and the ground-floor aisles. *De ceremoniis* (A.III.9) has the emperor and empress and their retinues assisting at the liturgy in the galleries, and identifies a gynaeceum in the ground-floor aisles. So in the fifth to sixth centuries, at least, the women were free to attend services downstairs, though some of them continued to maintain what may have been the older usage of going to the galleries.

Furthermore, apart from the text of Balsamon discussed above (A.III.11), the complete absence of Byzantine canons or other texts forbidding women from entering certain parts of the church building except the sanctuary, or of any legends or anecdotes in the homiletic, hagiographical, or historical literature about women being expelled from places forbidden to them, recommends caution in exaggerating separation of the sexes or the segregation of laywomen in church during the Byzantine period.³¹⁹

Why, then, do authors from Chrysostom systematically draw attention to the women up above in the galleries? If women were there not alone but together with at least some men (the imperial retinue, for instance); and if women attended liturgy on the ground floor too; then what was so distinctive and notable about their presence in

³¹⁷On the question of veracity vs. rhetorical convention in these accusations, see the discussion in A. Natali, “Tradition ludique et sociabilité dans la pratique religieuse à Antioche d’après Jean Chrysostome,” *Studia Patristica* 16, TU 129 (Berlin, 1985), 463–70. On the circumstances and contretemps of Chrysostom’s preaching in general, see Ch. Bauer, *Der heilige Johannes Chrysostomus und seine Zeit*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1929, 1930), I, 166–212; II, 72–83; R. Kaczyński, *Wort Gottes in Liturgie und Alltag der Gemeinden des Johannes Chrysostomus*, Freiburger theologische Studien (Freiburg-Basel-Vienna, 1974), esp. 271–306; O. Pasquati, *Gli spettacoli in S. Giovanni Crisostomo: Paganesimo e cristianesimo ad Antiochia e Costantinopoli nel IV secolo*, OCA 201 (Rome, 1976), chap. 7: “Spettacoli e liturgia”; and most recently, Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, *passim*.

³¹⁸Anastasius of Sinai (d. after 700) expatiates on this command in the context of church order in *Oratio de sacra synaxi*, PG 89:837ff (= CPG 7750).

³¹⁹The only instance I know is the A.D. 390 order of Valentinian II, Theodosius I, and Arcadius to eject from church women who have shaved their heads: *CTh* 1.2:843–44, § XVI, 2.27; P. R. Coleman-Norton, *Roman State and Christian Church: A Collection of Legal Documents to A.D. 535*, 3 vols. (London, 1966), II, 430, § 225; Sozomen, *Hist. eccles.* VII, 16.13–15, GCS 50:324 = PG 67:1464A. Shaving the head was a sign of disgrace (Coleman-Norton, II, 431 n. 13) or mourning (Quasten, *Music and Worship*, 163–64). Then there is the complaint in 518 A.D. about Bishop Peter of Apamea, apparently something of a hierarchical lecher, who, *inter alia*, allowed a disreputable unbaptized woman to stand in a place of honor in church: *ACO* III, 92ff; cf. L. R. Wickham, “Aspects of Clerical Life in the Early Byzantine Church in Two Scenes: Mopsuestia and Apamea,” *JEH* 46 (1995), 3–18, esp. 14–17.

the galleries that it attracted so much comment? Apart from the fact that the writers in question are all men, for some of whom, at least, women would presumably be of more interest than other men, I really have no answer to that question. But if we can take the word of Chrysostom and others for how some men behaved in church (see above, D.II), it is quite plausible that even after the system had begun to break down, respectable women continued to take refuge in the galleries to avoid being annoyed while at their devotions. In other words, even if women were not strictly obliged to attend services only in the gynaecea, it is quite possible that during services, at least, access to the galleries was restricted to women with their children and to the imperial party and their retainers.

In summary, then, in the churches of Constantinople:

1. Women assisted at liturgy from those sections of the galleries that were not cordoned off in some way and reserved for imperial use.
2. The imperial party also attended liturgy in the galleries and was brought communion there.
3. Apart from this imperial retinue, only women are reliably attested attending liturgy from the galleries, though I have presumed that their children, both male and female, were there with them too.
4. From the sixth century on, sources also witness to gynaecea in both ground-floor aisles flanking the nave.
5. Though no source ever places women in the central nave, no source excludes them from it either. But if the women were in the second-story galleries and ground-floor aisles, it is safe to infer that the central nave area, the only space left, was for the men.
7. By the end of Byzantium the galleries had apparently become a refuge for noblewomen, and their presence there during liturgy is stigmatized as divisive.
8. Since it is not attested to elsewhere until “Byzance après Byzance,” one may question whether Balsamon’s relegating women to the pronaos (above, A.III.11) is representative. At any rate, there is certainly no evidence for it before Balsamon.
9. The reasons for segregating women in church or forbidding their attendance at night services can be considered a combination of church order, decorum, gender discrimination, and paternalistic protection.